

The Judgment

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THE JUDGMENT

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BY
MARY R. H. KING



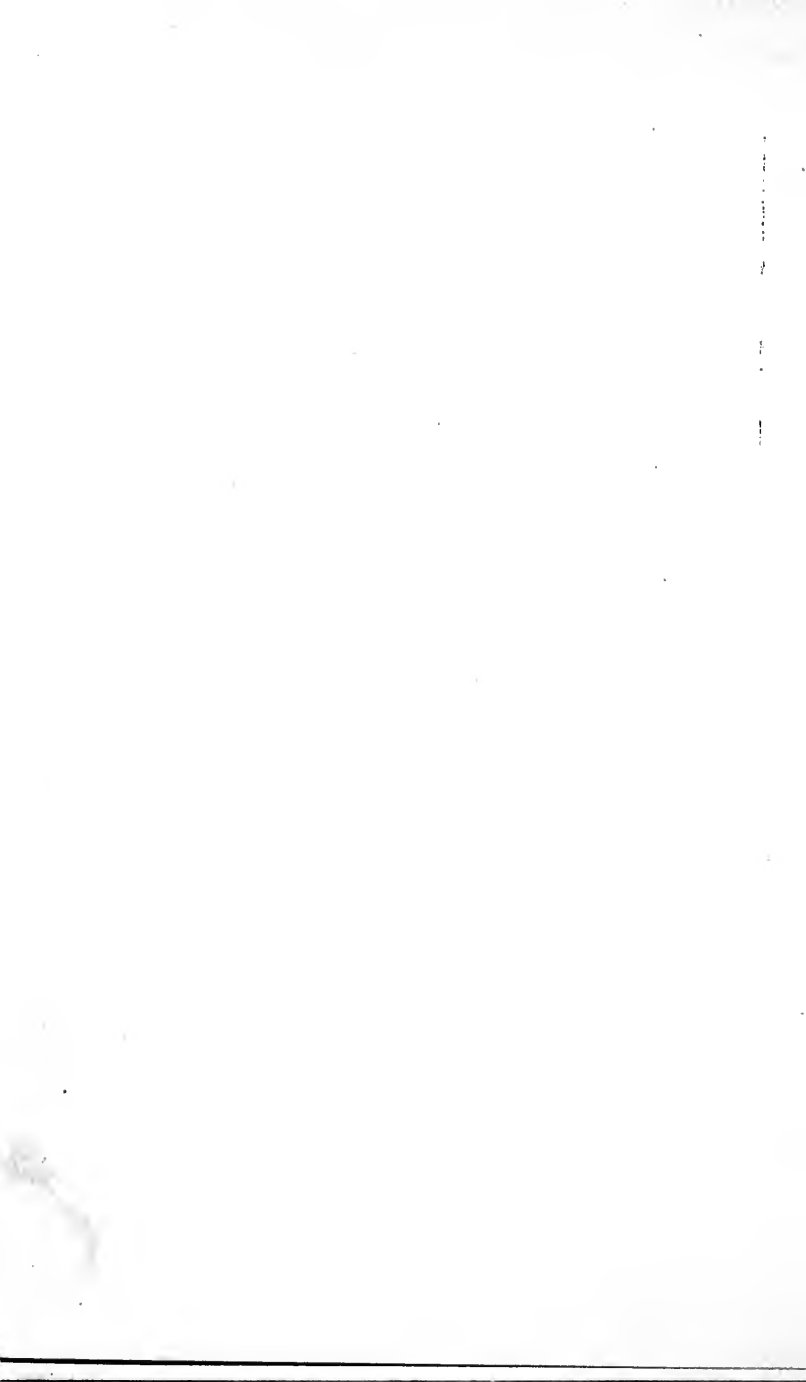
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BY MARY R. H. KING AND
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TO "SISTER"

*Truest friend, kindest critic, staunch supporter,
co-weaver of my story, I dedicate*

"THE JUDGMENT."



THE JUDGMENT

CHAPTER I

JOSEPH HOWARD loved his wife, so unselfishly that her self-centered disposition had not embittered or estranged his love. Years had accustomed him to her selfish demands until it had grown into a habit to expect of her no sacrifice. He had unconsciously fostered this trait until she carelessly demanded of others sacrifices such as she herself would never have dreamed of making.

In her fashionable set, pretty young Mrs. Howard was a well-known favorite of the social world. Pampered before her marriage, she knew no reason for giving to irksome domestic duties the time she lavished upon social pleasures.

Though at twenty she was a wife, no demand of motherhood came to disturb her gay serenity for five years. The child, Eleanor, was like her father, determined, truthful and magnanimous; like him also in her eager impetuosity. From him she inherited her tall, straight form, her slender patrician hands and feet, her large brown eyes that glowed with tender love or burned and blazed with indignation. Her head

was crowned with her mother's curling hair, but its golden tints shaded into the soberer shades of the father's, until the whole was a mass of reddish brown and gold, while her soft pink cheeks and crimson lips brought out the fairness of her fresh white skin.

As she grew, her beauty developed, and at fifteen, like a bud half opened, she gave rich promise. She was her father's greatest pride and joy; between them existed a rare degree of companionship. While they enjoyed many things in common, the individuality of each was so strong that often between them arose struggles of will in which neither was willing to give way.

Dr. Louis Bryan, her father's old-time friend, was generally Eleanor's ally in these wars of words, but sometimes he would oppose her for the joy of seeing her fight her battles unaided. "Our little rebel," they called her, delighting in the term. First for her father's, then for her own sake, Dr. Bryan loved Eleanor, and claimed her as half his own, in the place of the longed for child denied him in his own brief married life. Like his friend, Dr. Bryan was of Southern birth. This closely cemented the friendship between them, surrounded as they were by the distinctly Northern type.

To the joy of them both, Eleanor was more

like a Southern girl than might have been expected from her Northern training and the prejudices of her narrow-minded mother. The impulsive generosity and warm-hearted lovingness of the South was tempered in her by the coolly independent spirit of the North, a baffling combination where the two elements often warred.

When she was fifteen, her father died. With all the intensity of her ardent nature she grieved for him, and from that time the bonds between herself and the old Doctor grew into the close knit cords of sympathizing love. They became greater comrades than ever, and often on her daily way to the fashionable school where she was being "finished," Eleanor would stop for a few minutes' chat with him, sometimes leaving behind her a flower, sometimes only the recollection of her bright face and fondly teasing words.

Mrs. Howard stubbornly refused to follow Dr. Bryan's advice, urging the continuance of her husband's investments, and placed her fortune in the hands of Johnson Evans, an old time admirer of her own. He absconded, leaving them dependent upon Eleanor's small inheritance from her maternal grandmother.

This loss fell with stunning force upon Mrs. Howard, and left her prostrated. Instead of

recognizing that ruin had come through her own stubborn will, she reiterated her lamentations of the unkindness of fate, and declared that rather than endure privations she preferred to die, until her health began a rapid decline, and she became a troublesome, fault-finding invalid.

Eleanor, was now nearly nineteen, and her beautiful face bore the shadow of the heavy burden laid upon her shoulders. She had begun to realize that there was not enough in the frivolous education given by her thoughtless mother to fit her for any responsible work, and moreover, to this plan her mother offered the most stubborn opposition, saying that the day on which Eleanor chose to disgrace herself by work, she would surely die.

William Manning was forty-five. Sated with pleasure; worn out by excess; thrust as a boy into premature manhood by enormous wealth, and with utter absence of control, he had become, when man should be strongest, merely a suggestion of what he might have been. Selfishness was so engrafted to his soul that it left no room for thought or care for others. Small and slender; his little head was covered with straight black hair, and his close set black eyes shone brightly in his pointed, sallow face.

Since the days of her early marriage, Mrs. Howard had known Manning, and after her

husband's death he was a frequent visitor at her house. She had often thought of a second marriage during her young widowhood, but after losing her money, the offers of marriage were not many.

Mrs. Howard's nature was not one to enlarge upon the beauty of another, and in her comparisons of their attractiveness, her daughter's beauty always suffered. "So overgrown," she deplored, "and her hair and her eyes, well, thank heaven my hair is golden and my eyes are blue." So when Manning's visits grew more frequent, she had no thought of Eleanor as their cause, and her surprise when he told her was genuine. Always resourceful with her own interest at stake, she quickly recovered herself and accepted the situation with mental thanksgiving, that by this new arrangement she could enjoy its many benefits without the responsibilities of marriage. She was fully aware that Manning had sunk as low as men of high position sometimes sink, and that his tattered reputation hung to the skeleton of his lost respectability, but the glow of the promised golden harvest concealed his moral turpitude, and her eyes brightened while her cordial outstretched hands assured him of her co-operation.

For several months Manning's admiration

for Eleanor had been quickening until, no longer satisfied with fleeting glimpses, he had decided to visit her at home. The girl's indifference baffled him, and held him off, a little awed by the unconsciousness of unspoiled girlhood. He was surprised to find himself liking the new experience, of a woman looking at him with calm, unblinded eyes, his money a disregarded thing.

In his proposal, Mrs. Howard at once found the happiest solution of her problems. With Eleanor married to Manning, there need no longer remain the question of how to stretch their income to afford the luxuries she craved. This would remove any necessity for Eleanor's working, and all fears of privations for herself. "She is so like her father that she cannot refuse me anything," she mused, congratulating herself. As Eleanor entered the room, she lost no time. "Guess who has been here again, Dearie?"

"One of your friends?"

"One of *our* friends; one who is anxious to become our closest friend. Can't you make one little guess?"

"I have only one good friend; and it can't be Dr. Bryan, for I have just left him."

"No, it is some one who will soon be much nearer than Dr. Bryan," and Mrs. Howard's

voice was rather sharp. She had never shared her husband's love for their outspoken old friend.

"Then I could never guess; no one could ever be so near to me as Dr. Bryan."

"Then I will tell you; it was Mr. Manning."

"Yes? He must find it pleasant here to make a second visit this week."

"He does, and he proposes to come oftener."

"What a distinction," laughed Eleanor.

Mrs. Howard was finding it hard to convey her meaning. "Can't you imagine his motive, Eleanor, dear?" she asked, with an appealing tone in her voice.

At the familiar note, Eleanor turned, realizing that something lay beneath her mother's words, and answered: "Why, no, did he have a motive?"

"Yes—you."

"I! How could I be a motive for his visit?"

When Mrs. Howard was excited she showed it.

"Oh, Eleanor! do not refuse him," she cried, the usual tears starting from her eyes as she ran to Eleanor to throw her arms about her, but Eleanor, being tall, it was not convenient to embrace her in an unresponsive mood. Angered at this, Mrs. Howard began to weep. "You are just like the rest of the world, refus-

ing me my heart's one desire. You never think how I have suffered for you, or how my health is declining under all these awful privations, since I lost my money," she complained, as she threw herself upon the couch, sobbing loudly.

To Eleanor the cause of the outbreak was not plain. She could not see why she should be blamed, but she was so familiar with her mother's methods that she stood quietly waiting for the hysterics to subside and the secret to be made plain.

"Really, Mother," she said coldly, "I think this very unnecessary. If I have done anything to offend you, I am entirely unconscious of it; and as for Mr. Manning, since I have not seen him, I could hardly have offended him."

Mrs. Howard lifted pleading hands: "Just listen! Just listen! You are perfectly heartless! No feeling at all!" Her anger increased with her tears. "To think how I have suffered for you, how I have watched over you, looked after your welfare and your chances in life. Oh! Eleanor, some day I hope you will suffer as I am suffering now; that some day your heart may receive stabs from a heartless, thankless child."

While Eleanor was outwardly calm she was inwardly tumultuous. "What have I done now? Stop crying and tell me what you mean."

“Oh, you need not pretend that you do not see how easy it will make matters for us if you will only marry Mr. Manning.”

Eleanor’s eyes grew wild. “Marry Mr. Manning! I? Mother, have you lost your mind? What on earth put such an idea into your head?”

“He did. He put it there himself. He is wildly in love with you, and not an hour ago he asked my consent,” her mother answered, at once revived, misled by Eleanor’s calm, but almost before her mother’s words were spoken, Eleanor’s wrath culminated.

“The impertinent beast!” she cried, her eyes ablaze, “I would not marry him if there were not another man alive, and you can tell him so.”

At this her mother screamed again:

“Oh, think! Think, Eleanor, of how rich he is, and how poor we are. You know that I can no longer keep my maid, and it tires me so to comb my hair.”

“I can comb it for you,” Eleanor answered grimly.

“No! you pull it. Such cruelty will kill me; how can you hesitate when he can give us everything?”

Eleanor interrupted—“Mother! is there nothing better than money? Can money change his evil character? I do not want to marry any

one, much less such a man as that. I will work for you; I will protect you; I can find a place as governess; surely I am competent for that, and I will work hard for you, but—" She got no further, for her mother had fainted. Calling for help, but afraid to leave, Eleanor chafed the white hands until slow life returned.

Mrs. Howard was not strong. Scenes like this reduced her strength, leaving her a pitiful spectacle of weakness. But under the faded blonde beauty, there lay an indomitable will, and although she was confined to her bed for days, she never ceased her pleading.

With determined effort, day by day, she persisted. Argument only angered her, and when Eleanor finally refused to discuss the subject, it brought a fresh outbreak of rage and tears, followed by increasing weakness.

Dr. Bryan came and tried to quiet her excitement.

"No, Dr. Bryan, you do not know Eleanor. Her stubbornness is sinful. She is refusing what any other girl in New York would be only too glad to get, and she will never again have such a chance. He has been here five times this week, and each time she refused to see him. It is nothing but stubbornness, and I believe she does it to kill me, which it is doing,"

and she wound up her argument with another outburst of weeping.

“See here, Mrs. Howard, you must stop this at once; you cannot drive Eleanor into such a shameful thing as you propose. Do you want the servants to hear you, and to spread the report of it broadcast? I am ashamed of you, and if you will not control yourself I must administer something that will quiet you.”

Angered by his tone, as much as by what he said, a worse attack than usual came on. When she had grown quiet, Eleanor and Dr. Bryan, thankful for a few minutes' talk, sought the library. With an arm around her, he stroked her bowed head, while behind his spectacles tears shone. “Bear up, little girl, bear up,” was all he could say in his effort to console her.

Eleanor was far too tired to cry. For six days and nights she had listened to the same incessant complaints and charges of unkindness, and had seen each attack of her mother's hysteria followed by prostration more pronounced and alarming.

When at last she lifted her head, the somber eyes with their great dark circles brought an added pain to the tender heart of the old man.

“Help me, Doctor—Tell me, what can I do? Must I give in?” she asked, her voice hoarse and strained.

"Of course not, my child. It is horrible to make such a demand of you, and you shall not sacrifice yourself in any such infernal way. You know I love you; that you are as dear to me as if you were my own, and shall I sit by and see you sacrificed to a man of Manning's stamp to gratify your mother's heartless selfishness?"

"It has not come to that yet. I have refused her, but if she dies, I shall feel that I have killed her." Her voice rose excitedly. "How could I face father? He told me to watch over her. He said to me with almost his last whisper: 'Stick to Bryan, Eleanor, and take care of Mamma.' "

"Tut! tut! child; that is nonsense. If your mother dies to-night, it is not your fault, it is her own ungovernable nature that is killing her."

The girl caught at the words "is killing her." "Then she will die, you mean?" her eyes were wide and frightened. "Tell me," she demanded. He tried to calm her. "Eleanor, don't look like that. Be brave."

She paid no heed, but cried in terror: "Tell me, is she dying? Tell me, you must!"

"Not yet, but she very soon may be if she does not improve," he answered, not daring to refuse. "She is greatly weakened, and she was never strong." He did not add that in his

opinion it would be a good thing if she were dead.

"She will die, and I shall have killed her! Poor, weak little Mamma. This is how I have kept my promise to Dad." Her overwrought conscience scourged her to agony through the long hours of the night, as she sat watching her mother's disturbed sleep, and there Eleanor made her decision.

In the pale uncertain light of early morning, Eleanor stood at her mother's window, looking towards the rose-tinted promises of the sun. When her mother began to move, she whispered brokenly: "Oh, help me, Dad!"

As the querulous voice called, "Eleanor!" she turned toward the bed, and with a brave effort to control her voice, answered: "Yes, mother, I am here. Is there anything you want?"

The same plaint again: "I am so unhappy! so miserable!"

Then the girl spoke, and if her voice was cold, her mother did not know or care, for the words she heard brought happiness enough. "Mother, we need have no more of this. I will marry Mr. Manning, since nothing else will cure you."

In an instant the invalid's face brightened; she tried to raise herself, outstretched her arms and cried out joyfully: "Darling, come to me!"

How happy you make your poor sick mother!"

Eleanor's tone was lifeless when she spoke. "No, go to sleep again; excitement is not good for you. If the man comes to-day I will tell him. I am going to my room, but I'll send Jane to you."

Not for years had Manning been so eager as after reading the note Mrs. Howard sent him when Eleanor left the room, but despite the good news, his air was less jaunty and his sal-low face showed a few added lines, brought there by the past six days of waiting. His small, black eyes burned with a feverish glow as he waited for Eleanor, and as she entered the room, his dry lips tightened and the nervous brightness of his eyes was startling. He moved toward her eagerly, but she checked his advance by a curt nod of salutation, and a cold: "Will you be seated?"

His hot hand dropped, and he waited for her to speak. His eyes were never still, but searched and searched and sparkled in a way which no one likes to see.

With her natural straightforwardness, she came directly to the point. "My mother says you want to marry me. What made you think of such a thing?"

The tension loosened, his relief showed plainly in his face, as he answered, trying hard to keep

his voice controlled: "The sight of you did that. I want you because you are the most beautiful woman in New York."

The girl's face was disdainful, and her voice rang hard. "I do not care for flattery," she said, "and if I marry you, I assure you it is only to save my mother's life. The Doctor tells me she will die unless the excitement is removed. Nothing else on earth could make me consent to it. I do not wish to marry anyone, certainly not you." Her eyes and accent showed indescribable contempt.

He made an effort at lightness. "It grieves me that you do not love me, since my love for you is so great, but even so, I still desire you for my own. You may yet learn to love me."

"It is hardly likely," she replied. To any other man her tone and look would have been insult, but Manning only laughed. "Then let me say I have enough for both, and at any rate you will make the loveliest wife a man ever had."

He tried to place his hand on hers, but at the contact she snatched her own away as if his touch had burned her. She turned to him in pale-faced fury, her eyes ablaze, exclaiming: "How dare you! Move back!"

Into Manning's black eyes crept a look which Eleanor later learned to know. He laughed shortly as he moved backward.

“Just as you like. Let me hope that you may acquire more sociability. Wives do sometimes.” Then after a moment, he resumed: “May I venture to beg that you will not postpone my happiness?”

A hunted look crept to her face, as, breathing quickly she replied: “Surely there is no hurry. We need not now discuss the time.”

Manning’s cruel smile gathered. “Would you keep me longer in suspense? I have suffered for six days, and now that happiness awaits me, I am eager for it. I cannot wait—so do not ask it, but marry me at once.”

“At once!” she cried, drawing still further away from him. Her hand sought her throat as if to loosen a choking gasp, and her stricken eyes would have moved to pity any soul less mean; Manning’s eyes leaped with greedy satisfaction when he caught the look, which was almost fear, and he mercilessly pressed his advantage.

“But I am not ready; my mother is still dangerously ill, and until last night, I had not even considered the possibility of such a thing,” she urged, uncertainty and helplessness mingling with anger in her heart and voice.

Finally he pretended leniency. “Then I will call this evening, when I hope you will choose

the date for our marriage, and make me, soon, the happiest of men."

When he had gone, Eleanor stood immovable, her hands clenched together, her wide eyes staring ahead. Despair dried her tears, and drove them back to her tortured heart. "Nothing to hope for, nothing, nothing," she whispered, as Dr. Bryan entered. "What is this your mother tells me, Eleanor?" he asked, half fiercely; but when he saw Eleanor's face, he rushed to her, and tried to draw her to his arms.

"Don't," she cried wildly, "I cannot bear it. Don't be good to me now. Be like the rest of the world; be a devil!"

"Eleanor," the old man begged, "listen to me, let your old friend talk. You are not going to do this awful thing. That vile fellow shall never touch your footprints, much less your heart, to bruise and break it."

"Hush!" she interrupted, "I must do it. Let my old self die, never try to revive it, only stand by me when you can."

"Damnable selfishness!" the old man groaned, as the door closed. "That little cur her husband! My God! I'd rather she had died! Howard! Our little girl!" He bent before the picture of his friend, and hot tears streamed down his face.

Mrs. Howard's delight was unbounded. "We

will have everything now," she told herself, "we can live in luxury; my privations will soon be ended."

Resting happily upon her pillows, the pale color returning to her white face, an after-thought came. "It is the best for Eleanor; she couldn't work, and no doubt she will soon get used to him. I'm very sure I'd like a man who could give me so much." Her thoughts grew rapturous, anticipating the envy of her friends. Her smiling face evidenced the joy that filled her, and left no trace of pity for the girl, fighting the unequal struggle between her distorted idea of duty and her outraged sense of maidenly virtue. And Eleanor remained silent; her face grew white and drawn, her lips more tightly closed, her hands were cold and her heart seemed frozen, but she had decided upon her course, and her resolute bearing proved to those who knew her best. that she would not falter.

CHAPTER II

“FOR God’s sake, Mrs. Howard, stop a moment and think of the horror of this thing! You are condemning Eleanor to a life of misery. I tell you Manning is ruined; his evil habits have poisoned him until his manhood is gone. He has been under my care for years, and I know he is ruined. In her dead father’s name, I beg, I implore you, do not force this marriage.”

“Really, Dr. Bryan, I think you excite yourself more than is necessary about this affair of Eleanor’s and mine. I am quite sure that you overstate the case. It is most unfortunate that you do not approve Eleanor’s choice, but as I, her mother, do most heartily approve it, I fear that you will have to content yourself as best you can,” and as she finished, Mrs. Howard sank against her cushions, face and manner showing displeasure at his words.

This was more than the old man could bear, and his rage burst forth: “Then, at least I’ll have the pleasure of telling you once for all what I think of you, Madam. You ruined How-

ard's life with your petty selfishness, and eternal complaints, and now you would drive Eleanor into a life that is worse than death, and you are doing it to pamper your own selfish little soul. It is as bad as a life of open shame, to drive her into marriage with such a dog as Manning."

"Silence!" she commanded, rising in fury.

But he went on: "Yes, it is you who are doing this; doing it that by the sale of your child, you may reap your own harvest. It's a damned shame that such a little soul as yours should be able to bring misery to a noble one like hers."

The wedding took place on January tenth. While Eleanor received the wishes for her happiness from friends, now eager to express them, with an unbroken calm, her mother was reanimate with joy, and responded to every congratulatory wish as if she were the bride, unable to hide her rapture. When they had reached the sumptuous car, Eleanor entered like an automaton, with scarcely a glance to the volatile French maid bowing a welcome. Soon the train plowed on through banks of snow and ice, a mighty monster bidding defiance to the cruel forces of the biting cold.

The discreet servants withdrawn, Eleanor and Manning were left alone. He was full of

eagerness to touch the freshness of the young girl's heart, captured, but not yet won. As he watched the slender form and impassive face before him, he murmured beneath his breath: "My wife—not yet."

He took in anew the beauty of her youthfulness, while in his selfish heart a kind resolve struggled for life. "As mine, she shall have everything the heart of woman can desire." She met each attention with unmelting coldness; not once did her face brighten; the large, brown eyes held no sign of interest, but her gaze rested on the dreary outside landscape.

The hours passed as if unnoticed by her, but the time seemed interminable to him, rebelling at her coldness, and he again broke the intolerable silence, "Say something, Eleanor."

For a moment she did not answer, and then she did not turn her head, and her voice was low and tense, "There is nothing to say."

"Oh, yes there is," he responded, thankful that the spell of long silence was finally broken. "You might say that everything outside looks cold, or that the wind is blowing, or you might tell me that you love me, as a dear little wife should do."

As he spoke, he came nearer to her; his black eyes sparkled, and the blood mounted to his sallow cheeks. Ominous sign. And as Eleanor saw it, her outraged heart stirred with resent-

ment, while a waking recognition of its meaning choked her with dread. Fighting hard to conceal her fear, she answered: "That would not be true."

He scanned her face intently, thinking how he should proceed, and his thin lips curled, as he promised himself: "I will conquer her, then we shall see."

With a stern restraint, he decided to make another effort; this time along impersonal lines: "Beastly winter," he remarked, "but we will meet an early June in Florida. Ever in Florida before?"

"No."

"Lovely climate and fine hotels; bathing, fishing, dancing; everything. Do you like dancing?"

"Not now."

"You will be charmed with Florida. I hope you brought plenty of pretty clothes. I want my wife to be always well-dressed."

He waited for the reply which did not come, and then persisted: "Did you buy many pretty things, Eleanor? Your mother promised me to see to that."

Had he known her better he might have seen a danger signal flash over her face, but to him it was only a blush which pleased him.

"Did you, Eleanor?" he asked again.

With a look of supreme scorn, she answered in her coldest tone: "I do not know, I did not examine them."

All his efforts to talk to her ending in failure, he fell to watching her as she sat apparently unmoved, her face turned toward the window, as if she might be unconscious of his presence. He bit his lip in rage. "When my time comes, I'll make her pay for this," he snarled beneath his breath.

The dreary day tired itself out, and withdrew behind the darkening shadows of evening; night came down, and began to cover the wintry landscape with her sable cloak.

Eleanor still sat in the drawing-room gazing out into the night, when Cleo, the French maid, came in, bearing a tray with a dainty service.

"I think Madame might like a leetle tea, for you have not touch one bite since we have made the start," she explained, settling the service and drawing the blinds. "M'sieur will join you, if him you want," she added, according to Manning's instructions, but as Eleanor gave no answer, he entered uninvited.

Eleanor could not drink her tea, and the hand that poured it trembled; but Manning's appetite was unimpaired. Her preoccupation did not prevent his enjoyment of the meal. He seldom attempted conversation at the table, for eating

was there with him the principal business. No one could fail to see the relish with which he disposed of everything before him, and Eleanor thought with disgust: "How can so small a man devour so large a quantity of food?" He glanced at her, and perhaps her face held some hint of her thoughts, for with a sinister smile he remarked: "My love for you is very great, but as you do not make sufficient return to sustain me, I must resort to more material aid." Eleanor turned away without reply, and he promised himself requital: "when my time comes."

An hour later Cleo entered, and standing by Eleanor's side with her demure air, said in her soft and broken drawl: "Ze state room ees raidy, Madame, vill you not come?"

"No—you may go, I shall not need you."

"But Madame ees in need of ze rest," she urged.

"I prefer to remain here."

"I can do nothing, M'sieur," Cleo complained to Manning, waiting for the outcome of the interview.

"I will see her," and in a brave assumption of authority, he opened the drawing-room door. The silent figure seemed scarcely to have moved since first they started, and she showed no sign of having noted his entrance.

"My dear, this will not do; you must have rest; you must go to sleep."

"I cannot sleep."

"You cannot unless you try. Come, be reasonable; let Cleo make you comfortable for the night."

Eleanor lifted her eyes to him, and a better man would have detected the appeal lying in their depths. "Let me stay here." Manning's irritation was not well controlled. "Confound such obstinacy," he muttered, going back to his stateroom next to hers.

During the passing hours the roar of the train was the only sound which broke into the stillness of the night. It was past three o'clock when Cleo came for the third time to beg her mistress to take some rest, but as she reached the door she halted, for Eleanor was standing in the center of the little room, her face drawn with agony. All day roses had filled the warm air of the apartment with a sweetness she had loathed. Oppressed now past endurance, she opened the window, and as if spurning from her some hateful thing, she filled her arms with the flowers and threw them out, then bent her head to the window for the touch of the cold night air to revive her. When Cleo entered, Eleanor's worn-out body added its craving for rest to the pleading of the insistent maid, and she

arose to follow her. Not until then did she realize the strain under which she had passed the day. Her feet gave way, as she tried to walk; she swayed and fell against the wall. Seeing Eleanor's pallid face and swaying form, Cleo uttered a piercing scream. "Madame ees fainting!" she cried, in frightened tones, when Manning hurried towards them.

"No, I am not fainting; I am perfectly well; I only stumbled from the motion of the train," Eleanor insisted, angry both with herself and the maid for having caused the excitement.

"No wonder you are faint, you eat nothing, and sit up all night," Manning cried in a tone of impatience.

Eleanor made no reply, but entered her state-room and surrendered herself to the practiced hands of the maid.

She was soon again alone in the quiet and darkness of the winter night; alone, but with such thoughts for companions as brought the hot rebellious tears to the aching eyes. Who heard the quivering sobs that shook the slender form, or understood the baptism of agony through which she groped a blinded way, where blighted hopes and girlhood dreams lay dead around her, as she passed to take up this new life?

It was long in passing, this storm of anguish;

and only when the gray dawn began to blush at the ardor of the morning kiss of the rising sun, rest came to her saddened heart. Sleep was so heavy that she lay unconscious of Cleo's entrance with the morning cup of chocolate. The maid, alarmed at her appearance, hastily summoned Manning. A slight hesitation showed in his assured face as he entered the room and stood gazing at the girlish form sunk in sleep. His heart leaped with desire as he leaned above her. The crimson lips were half way parted like a child's in sleep; her face rested on one hand; one long, soft braid of hair lay across her shoulder, while one was crushed beneath her. The full sleeves of the soft, white gown fell back and showed her rounded arms. One hand lay on her breast, its fingers enmeshed in the soft laces of her low-necked gown, as if even in sleep she would guard the entrance to her heart. The rounded breasts rose and fell beneath the filmy lace, through which the soft, white flesh was dimly seen. The man stood still and gazed, his eyes ravished by the wondrous beauty of the woman. "God, she's mine!" he whispered, and then as if she heard, a quivering sigh issued from her lips, and Eleanor stirred.

Manning withdrew in haste, giving orders that she should not be disturbed until she

awakened of her own accord, and while she slept he sat near her door, watching and waiting for the first sign of her awakening.

The morning hours passed very slowly to him as he waited there, his soul afire with fierce longings for the delicate, fresh beauty of the woman so lately but a child; and with an impure love he craved the moment when he would subdue the proud young spirit, and subjugate the sweet young heart.

When Eleanor awoke, in her youthful strength, refreshed by sleep, life seemed to show a countenance less forbidding. Blessing of youth; to sleep and wake refreshed and strengthened.

Even the cold winds of the North had during the night's travel become tempered by the milder climate of the upper South; and looking from her window she saw the river rippling by, unchecked by icy barriers and felt hope stir and arise within her heart. "Let me learn to make the best of it," she whispered to the girl looking at her from the gilt framed mirror.

Cleo's dextrous hands found it easy to destroy the ravages left on her mistress's face by the stress of the night before, and when Eleanor entered the drawing-room, Manning rose with quick, involuntary homage to her beauty. The heavier dress of yesterday had been replaced

by a gown of dull blue silk; the yoke, which came far down the shoulders, was of creamy satin wrought heavily with golden threads; the girdle round the slender waist held the same embroidery; the skirt hung straight and full, and fell in graceful folds round her highly arched feet. The dress was simple, but the queer dull color brought out the bronze shades of her hair and enhanced the clear white skin and tinted cheeks. Her glorious brown eyes and scarlet lips added the completing touch to a picture so exquisite as to have stirred to ardor any heart. Yesterday's look of cold restraint had become tempered by the softened expression of hopefulness; that same which stirs and thrills us all alike till hope itself is dead.

"I overslept," she said, looking toward him as she passed into the sumptuous little apartment.

"I trust it rested you," he answered, and extended a chair towards her. "You are just in time for lunch."

She accepted with half a smile the commonplace remark, and the meal proceeded cheerfully enough, for Manning had determined to redeem his mistakes of yesterday and exerted himself to be agreeable.

As they traveled, Manning pointed out to her the points of interest along the way. There a

turbulent stream, whose bank marked the scene of a hard-fought battle of the Civil War; not far away stood an old fort, where an army of gallant Northern soldiers found themselves repulsed by the dauntless bravery of their Southern brothers. Since early youth love for the sunny land of her father's birth and boyhood had filled Eleanor's heart, and these scenes of the long-drawn, hopeless struggle against superior might filled her with vivid interest. "If Dad could be with me," was her involuntary thought; the loving memory of him banished for the time the distastefulness of the present, and made her glow with interest.

To Manning's eyes the girl was irresistibly lovely in her fresh enthusiasm, and he found a pleasure new and strange to him in adding to it, in pointing out to her the historic scenes which stand as milestones marking our country's onward march. And onward through the Southern States the train made its rapid way, till they found themselves on the borders of that land of perpetual sunshine—Florida.

Eleanor stood with Manning upon the platform of the car, while the train sped along through the tangled riot of beauty on each side of the track.

When the train reached Palm Beach, night had fallen, and they could hear the washing of

the mighty waves rolling over the sands of the level beach beneath their windows.

Manning had engaged the most sumptuous suite of rooms in the great hotel, itself a work of art; man's artistic handiwork framed in that of nature.

Surrounded by luxury, lulled to sleep by the music of the waves, Eleanor lay wrapped in child-like slumber till morning came, and with it, Cleo. "Madame vill mees ze sight of ze bathers eff she does not rise."

Through the open windows the soft wind came with gentle greeting from the ocean's breast, and Eleanor caught her breath in wonder at the beauty of the view.

The bathers raced down the sands to spring like the sea birds into the rippling waves; sporting in the water as if it were their native element, while on the sands onlookers loitered, bathed in the morning sunshine.

"M'sieur demands to know if Madame would like a stroll on the beach before breikfus," came Cleo's voice as Eleanor stood at the window.

"Yes, it is too lovely to stay indoors," she answered, impatient for the warm glory of the sun. In the sitting-room she joined him. His face was eager, too. but not with thoughts of the outside scene.

As Eleanor advanced, dressed in a modish

white linen suit, heavy with embroidery, a large white hat shading her face, wherein her soft brown eyes glowed with expectancy which even dislike for him could not entirely hide, Manning thought as he greeted her: "Each time I see you, you are more beautiful."

The blue water and the bluer sky, each with its touch of white in cloud and foam, delighted her throughout the brief stroll. Enjoyment of the simple things of Nature enhanced her beauty and drew in her direction more than one pair of interested eyes. Eleanor did not see this, but Manning knew and realized no pleasure from the fact.

"I see a number of people are already here," he remarked, strolling back toward the entrance; "I met the Gordon-Leighs last night. They asked for you, but I told them you were too tired to come down to the dance. No doubt we will meet them to-day. I want you to be the loveliest woman at the dance to-night." His eyes followed her close, and she found it hard to evade them. In his look and manner lay suggestion of a hungry animal. He had no appreciation to-day for either clouds, sky or sea; his mind was fixed on Eleanor and incidentally upon the other men who watched her.

At breakfast numerous greetings awaited them from acquaintances arrived before them,

and like all youth, Eleanor responded to the genial spirit pervading the place, and as a flower opens its heart, responsive to the warm caresses of the sun, her face caught and reflected the light of the lovely morning, and for a little while hid from her the fact that behind Manning's light and pleasant talk lay the deeper note of passion and suspicious jealousy gleaming in his ferret-like eyes at the admiring glances cast her way.

In her room she found flowers such as it seemed impossible to imagine growing anywhere in January; great, glorious roses, in their fragrance so unlike their frailer sisters grown within the Northern hot houses.

She caught her breath in sheer delight, her face aglow with wonder. "Ah! the beauty of such a land," she cried, her arms filled with roses, her eyes filled with joy in the beauty thus outspread. "How could one get enough of Florida?"

Manning's restraint began to gall him. This woman was his wife; must he stand back with ceremonious politeness, waiting for her to invite further demonstrations of love? "The roses please you?"

"Yes, everything here pleases me," she answered, with the unconsciousness of a child.

Something choked him; he swallowed hard.

“And you please me,” and coming close he caught her hand, lifted and pressed upon it his hot kisses. Withdrawing from him with nervous haste, she declared: “You crush my roses,” and gathered them again into her arms, retiring further into the embrasure of the window. Manning’s face grew dark as he watched her retreating form, and the look in his eyes was not a nice one. “My time is coming soon,” he whispered to himself, and moistened his hot, dry lips.

Eleanor spent the greater part of the remaining day trying to avoid any further conversation with him. Meeting people from their circle of acquaintances in New York made it easier for her to pass the time away, and she thought he did not understand her ruse.

The gay crowds were gathering in the brilliant ballroom. Eleanor stood before the long mirror in the dressing room, while Cleo put the last deft touches to her toilette. Her evening gown exposed the soft beauty of her neck and shoulders. Her lovely arms were bare. The creamy whiteness of her skin was not more charming than the rounded contour of the arms; soft and white and dimpled, they needed nothing to enhance their beauty.

As Cleo was fastening a straying curl which, refusing to remain in the unaccustomed staid-

ness, fell down and clung like baby fingers close round the small pink ear, Eleanor heard a slight noise behind her, and turning faced her husband.

His dapper little form was clad in immaculate evening dress, from the stiff white collar and precise tie to the tips of his glistening shoes. His dark hair was plastered close to his small head. His white shirt threw into bold relief the sallow tints of his face, in which now burned ominous dark red stains.

Eleanor's wide eyes demanded of him explanation of this unannounced appearance in her room.

He laughed with nervousness, but determined to treat his presence as only a matter of course, he came forward, saying: "It is time we went down, so I came to see if you were nearly ready."

"I would have sent Cleo to you soon," she answered.

"But my coming has saved you that trouble, my wife," he broke in smilingly.

The words and the look accompanying them sent a thrill of something hitherto unknown or only guessed at throughout her being.

Manning, watching her narrowly, saw her tremble, and at the sight he smiled, then spoke again. "You must have thought it strange that

I gave you only your diamond pin upon our wedding day. I have something here to accompany it, but have kept it till now to surprise you. Let us see if it suits the pin," and he held out a square silver box beautifully engraved, to the handle of which hung a key.

"The pin?"

Something showed in Eleanor's face which made him ask, "Where is your pin?"

"I don't know," she answered, confused.

"Don't know?" he repeated her words in a tone of inquiry. "Surely you have some knowledge of the whereabouts of your wedding gifts."

"I forgot it," she explained, as yet too unversed in duplicity to recognize the usefulness of a discreet prevarication.

Cleo came forward smiling. "Madame forgets her jewels, but I naifer do forget," her eyes upraised, appealing for commendation from the excited man.

"Nice girl," he said under his breath.

"I haif ze brooch," she said, her smiling face uplifted, indicating by the upward shrug of her shoulders that between herself and Manning lay a mutual understanding of Eleanor's peculiar defections.

Manning gave her a glance apparently satisfactory, for it brought a pleased smile to her

flushed face as she hastily produced the missing brooch.

Though Eleanor witnessed the by-play between her husband and her maid, she did not yet know either of them so well as to catch its full significance.

"I am sorry I forgot the brooch," she apologized.

"I hope you may attach more importance to these," he dryly answered, and placed the box upon the table, inserted the key, threw back the top displaying upon the white velvet trays such exquisite diamonds as few women have seen; fewer still possessed.

"Oh! how beautiful!" from the enraptured maid, "Madame will be like ze angels of God."

Manning lifted the sparkling jewels, and with a punctilious: "Allow me," fastened the bracelets round Eleanor's tapering arms, then around her soft white neck, the glittering jeweled chain. Could the touch of the gold have made her start as if with sudden pain, or was it the contact of the fingers that clasped it which filled her soul with terror?

CHAPTER III

ELEANOR had been away four weeks, but even in that short time the improvement in her mother's appearance and health had been marvelously rapid. Happiness is truly a great restorer.

When Manning bade her farewell, he slipped a generous bank note into her hand. "Stint her in nothing," he had said, and Mrs. Howard took him at his word. The gowns she ordered for the homecoming of the bride were fit for the wardrobe of a queen. "She must have them to be able to hold his love," she argued.

The adroit French costumers understood their patron, and amid the delicate blues, pinks and greens, they displayed gorgeous brocades of more subdued colorings. "These are too old for her," she answered, while her hands strayed with caressing touch down the soft length of a pale mauve brocade.

"Ah! but it ees made but for Madame's self. Peecture yourself in this, touched up with silver. Ah! but you will be like a girl again. You must not tink alone of ze chile, forgetting always ze sweet beauty of ze mother. Yais, dese soaf clinging robes for her, but ze loafly brocades for you," and Madame proved herself an irresist-

ible temptress. Invitations and cards poured in and the air was replete with happy congratulations.

At Manning's home another view of life was being taken. His sisters, Maud and Eva, aged thirty-six and thirty-two, respectively, had until now been joint mistresses of his home, and the knowledge of the coming of another to take their place was very galling.

Mrs. Judith Norton, their aunt, for her own reasons, augmented these feelings of resentment, and it was easily seen that Eleanor would get no help or sympathy from any of them.

Mrs. Norton's rustling gown and costly furs could not mitigate the harshness of a countenance like hers. Her dark sallow skin was overspread with wrinkles; the Manning eyes in their black beadiness were set close together under her narrow forehead; her prominent nose shadowed a mouth with cruel lips. She was tall, and her slight figure showed acute angles despite the care of a painstaking dressmaker.

Maude was almost as tall as Mrs. Norton, but less angular; her dark eyes were like her aunt's, and her mouth was quite as cruel. It shut tight and close as if imprisoning forever the chance expression of a kindly thought.

Eva was smaller than her sister, and her small light blue eyes lent little charm. Her

pale brown hair had now lost its youthful yellow tint in a long since hopeless drab. The Manning mouth was with her, modified by weakness. Her nose was her trouble; it was large, long, hooked and red, and forced her to spend the greater part of her winters indoors. It had always been her despair, and despite her careful powderings and painstaking care, remained a torment to its possessor.

"They say Mrs. Howard had made some very poor investments, and without this marriage to William they would now have almost nothing," Eva said.

"Knowing William as I do," Maude answered, "I think she made a bad investment when she chose him as a husband for her daughter."

"I hope you will not express yourself so freely when he returns, or we will find ourselves reduced to our allowance named in papa's ridiculous will," advised careful Eva.

"I hear that he will be back within a week," Mrs. Norton remarked.

"Yes, a short note came this morning," answered Maude. "He is having her rooms furnished gorgeously, and at great expense. I want you to see them."

Eva joined in. "He has already spent more on her than on us in all our lives."

“Yes, but that, you must remember, is a trait of the Manning men. They are always ready to lavish their wealth on their wives, while they are young and fresh. I had the same experience with your father that you are now having with William, and as you know, he gave me almost nothing. Women, in the Manning family, have always been held of small account as compared to the sons and brothers through whom is perpetuated the Manning name and money. I know the bitterness of being put aside for others. If I had not married your Uncle Norton it would have been a hard struggle for me to have maintained my position in society. I hope to see you both well settled in life, but I dread the effects of this unfortunate marriage of William’s upon your prospects,” and Mrs. Norton folded her hands, waiting for the effect of her words.

She had never forgiven her brother for having inherited most of their father’s wealth; her resentment had extended to her nephew, and she was determined to encourage in his sisters the feeling of ill will implanted by his marriage, until under her nurturing care it should yield a harvest of revenge. Far down, too, in the recesses of her memory lay the recollection of the time when Joseph Howard, young, handsome and rich, came to New York. With all

the coquettish arts of the fully developed spinster, she had assailed his heart, only to be met by the crushing announcement of his engagement to the young and lovely Miss Williamson, afterward Eleanor's mother. She had unceasingly fostered since then an increasing store of vengeful thoughts.

Maude's black eyes snapped resentfully, and her mouth extended itself into a thin straight line, dividing her face.

In Eva, resentment seemed less fierce, more spiteful. Her red nose grew redder, and her pale eyes swam in tears.

"But, my dears," Mrs. Norton continued, "we must remember, even in the midst of our disappointments, to confine ourselves to conventional acts, and you should, if you have not already done so, for the sake of appearances, call upon Mrs. Howard."

"We did, and found her out. We were afraid he would be angry if we did not go."

"Since he had to marry, it's some little comfort that he chose a woman from our own set. He might have married some dreadful person. They often do, when they get this marrying craze. I intend to call on Mrs. Howard on my way home this afternoon. Tell me something about the girl. I hear that she is beautiful."

Maude answered quickly, "I am sure I can-

not see any signs of beauty in her. The day she was married she looked more like a piece of mechanism than a living woman. Her face was as white as paper, and she was as stiff as if she had been frozen. She seems as cold as ice. I don't believe she has a heart."

"So she is not handsome? I think I remember her as a very pretty child."

"Some people might think so; for my part I prefer some animation."

At Manning's club his surprising marriage still made gossip. A crowd of men loitered round the tables. "I hear that Manning and his young wife are expected back in a few days," said one.

"That so? They say she is a beauty and very young. Ever see her?"

"No, not since her father died. She is young, though. Too young, I guess, to know Manning. Wonder how Mademoiselle Follette takes it."

"I don't know, but I guess it cost Manning something to quiet her."

"And Mrs. Van Buskirk! What about her?" At the laugh following this question an old man put down his paper, revealing himself as Dr. Bryan, and peered over his glasses.

"Who made the match?" asked the first speaker.

"Her mother, I guess. Howard's money left the country with Johnson Evans."

"Yes, I heard something of that; and so they went after Manning's. That it, eh?"

"Guess so," laughed the other man. "Girls, nowadays, are pretty wise, and no doubt this young beauty was as willing as she needs to be."

Dr. Bryan jumped up, his face purple. "You damned little whipper-snapper," he bellowed, "who are you to be meddling in people's affairs? What do you know about Joe Howard's daughter? I'll crush the life out of you, if you open your mouth again. If it were not beneath the dignity of a man to notice you, I would throw you out of the window. Don't let me ever hear you mention the name of Joe Howard's daughter again. It is a shame that such creatures as you should live," and Dr. Bryan shook his crumpled paper in the face of the astonished young dandy, rapidly retreating from this unexpected onslaught.

Still muttering, when he had donned his overcoat, the old man pulled his hat over his eyes, and left the club room in disgust and sorrow.

When Manning and Eleanor arrived, New York was in the throes of a mighty snow-storm. Eleanor stepped into the carriage, shivering as the cold night wind struck her face.

Manning was in no pleasant mood; cold irritated him. He gave his orders in harsh tones, and enveloped in his huge fur coat, crouched in a corner of the carriage, blue and trembling.

The driver lashed his horses to their fastest gait over the slippery pavement, and as she watched the flickering lights through the falling snow, Eleanor felt life's burden fall upon her, harder and heavier than before.

As they approached, the house was well lighted and the door held open by an obsequious footman. Manning's sisters were waiting in the long drawing-room, where were bright lights and a fireplace filled with leaping flames.

"Well, girls, here we are," Manning began.

"Nearly frozen to death, too, I am sure, poor man," from Maude, eager to touch aright her brother's selfish heart.

Manning advanced towards the fire, and his sisters busied themselves about him. He was too cold to think of the reception they were giving to his bride, as she stood waiting, white and cold, until turning he saw her, and said: "Come to the fire, Eleanor. Girls, here is your new sister. I was so cold I forgot everything."

They touched Eleanor's cold face with their thin, tightly-drawn lips, and in carefully phrased greeting, declared their delight at her coming. But Eleanor's face did not relax, and

at the first opportunity she arose, saying: "I am so tired that I would like to go to my rooms."

"No doubt you are tired," Maude responded, rising to show the way, and as they went upstairs she said perfunctorily:

"You find New York very different from Florida, no doubt."

"Yes, New York seems very cold."

"Your mother's rooms are ready, but she preferred to wait for your arrival, before she came," Maude went on. "How do you like this?" Eleanor glanced around the beautiful apartments. "William wrote that you liked your dressing-room in Florida, and so he had it copied for you here. I am sure there are not more lovely rooms in all New York."

"They are certainly very beautiful," Eleanor answered, but there was little animation in her voice.

"Well, I must not keep you up when you are so tired. I will go, and you can tell us of Florida in the morning," and Maude left her with a hypocritical pretense of kindness.

The next day when Eleanor entered the breakfast room she found Manning and his sisters waiting for her. His dark face wore an unusually peevish expression. "I must request you to be prompt in coming to meals,

Eleanor," he said; "nothing is more distasteful to me than having to wait."

The rebuke acted as a stimulus to Eleanor's jaded spirits, but it gave her no more love for Manning nor for his sisters who heard her receive it.

Maude's black eyes flashed to Eva's pale ones, a look of pleased intelligence. "Had you informed me as to the breakfast hour," Eleanor answered, "I should not have kept you waiting."

Surprised at the new note in her voice, Manning looked at her. Stirred by her beauty, a momentary kindness flashed through his ill humor, and lent him the grace to say: "Then it is our fault; please forgive the oversight."

Eva turned to Eleanor. "There are countless cards and invitations waiting for you. Your hands will be full when you begin to sift them out."

"I will help you, my dear, when you are ready for that," Manning joined in. "There are some places to which I do not wish you to go, and there are some people whose acquaintance I wish you to cultivate." Though Eleanor made slight answer to her husband's remarks, the expression on her face led him to wonder if the crushed young girl might yet develop into a woman hard to manage.

After breakfast, at his request, Eleanor joined Manning. "I want to discuss with you the final arrangements for your mother's coming," he said. "Doubtless you are anxious to be together, and it is with this view that I have selected rooms for her near your own. Would you like to see them?"

In the rooms set apart for Mrs. Howard's use Manning had manifested his willingness to repay her for her co-operation in his suit.

It was a place expressive of comfort and luxurious ease, and as Eleanor's eyes rested on its beauty she told herself: "This will satisfy mother that she made a good bargain."

As she did not speak, Manning asked: "Do you think this will please her? She said she wanted it done in lilac."

"I think it will," she answered slowly, wondering bitterly how many details of the bargain had been settled without her knowledge.

When Mrs. Howard arrived and with outstretched arms rushed to her crying, "My darling child," Eleanor was impressed by the change in her mother's appearance. She was bright and cheerful. Her figure had regained much of its youthful grace and symmetry, and the color glowed in her cheeks almost as if placed there by the expert hands of nature.

Eleanor instinctively turned away, and a

spasm of pain crossed her face, thinking of the years to which all these things condemned her.

Mrs. Howard could see the change wrought in her daughter's face by the past few weeks, but it was not in her nature to sympathize with Eleanor's "heroics." She entered into the enjoyment of her softly feathered nest, unmindful of all but it, while into Eleanor's heart grew the realization that she was as nothing contrasted to her mother's greed for luxury.

The following morning Eleanor in her private sitting-room, was engaged in writing letters. Manning had carefully assorted the accumulated invitations, arranging them into two lots. The pile of invitations to be declined was answered, and she had begun on those to which answers of acceptance must be sent.

Her mother entered and began to talk. "I am glad that Dr. Bryan has not had the impertinence to call on us after the way in which he talked to me, when you were married."

Eleanor raised her head and said: "Talked to you, mother; when and what did he say?" Then followed an account, colored to Mrs. Howard's fancy, of the conversation with the Doctor. "Promise me, Eleanor, that if he calls you will refuse to see him."

Eleanor looked at her for a moment, and at last asked coldly: "Do you mean to ask me to

refuse to see father's best friend, and my only one? I shall certainly not do so. If I did not have him to care for me, I should be more friendless than I am. Ask something else, mother."

CHAPTER IV

THE Lenten season, with its assumption of demureness, descended upon society, and afforded a rest to the jaded devotees of fashion. There were fewer entertainments, but the "smaller" evenings brought to the frivolous that distraction without which life to them would lose its interest.

In her anxiety that Eleanor should prove a success in society, Mrs. Howard noticed with increasing alarm her daughter's unconcealed disgust at the flagrant flirtations of many of the women whom she met.

"You must not show your feelings so plainly, Eleanor," her mother said, disapproving her bare civility of the day before, when Mrs. Van Buskirk had called at the Manning home.

"Do you mean that I should pretend to be glad to see her? No woman could behave more shamelessly than she."

"You can't help what she does, and if you continue to snub her, as you have been doing, people will say that you are jealous of her. Indeed, they are saying so now."

"I, jealous of a woman like that? How can anyone imagine it?" Eleanor spoke coldly.

“Why, William, of course.”

“And what of him?”

“Well, if you must know, everyone says he was on very friendly relations with her last winter. Everybody knows it, and talks about it, and if you don’t receive her pleasantly, they will say you are jealous. You must exert yourself to hold William’s love; use all your attractiveness and your beauty, and meet him with smiles. He will begin to see that other men may admire you. This will make him love you more, and he may let that woman go; but unless something new comes out, you will have to treat her more cordially.”

“Mother! Mother! how can you talk so? Are wealth and social position the only things worth living for? I cannot endure the woman, or the kind of society in which she moves, and you tell me that I must associate with her for the sake of society. I thought I had made sufficient sacrifice when I married to please you—”

But here her mother interrupted. “Such tirades are in very bad taste, Eleanor, you must learn to overlook many things tolerated by older and wiser ones than you, or you will certainly lose the place William has given you.”

Manning had planned to make their first for-

mal entertainment a large ball during Easter week. The weather was particularly fine.

Eleanor was dressed in soft clinging satin of a creamy tint, enhancing her calm stateliness, as she stood at her husband's side to receive their guests.

"Heavens! Look at her!" Maude gasped, in unexpected outburst at Eleanor's beauty.

"Look, Maude, look! When he buys pearls like those it means that we will not get much." And Eva clutched Maude's large bare arm with energy.

"Don't pinch my arm off about it," snapped Maude.

As the guests arrived, Eleanor greeted them with composed cordiality; that cordiality which we assume when we wish to blind the world to the cold indifference beneath. Only once throughout the evening did her face brighten into anything like warmth; when Dr. Bryan bowed with old-time courtliness above her outstretched hand.

When Mrs. Norton came, her face showed that she had lost none of the acidity of her temperament. She bestowed upon Eleanor a searching scrutiny, then lifted her voice to a tone distinctly audible throughout the crowded room: "Ah, my dear, how are you? Quite like a South Sea Island princess, I see. How are

you, William? Feeling better than you look, I hope.” And passing on to Mrs. Howard, who stood a few steps beyond her daughter, she grasped her hand, and holding it fast, to prevent an escape before the conclusion of her remarks, said, while everyone listened: “Good evening, Mrs. Howard, I hardly knew you, you are looking so remarkably improved. You have undoubtedly secured a new maid lately. What a genius she is, to be sure.” Perfectly aware of the close attention of the amused onlookers, the old woman went on— “You must tell us how you were able to secure this treasure. Ah, no? then it leaves us with only our imagination to enlighten us,” and she passed on delighted at the storm of rage she left in Mrs. Howard’s face.

Maude and Eva saw her coming. They had heard her remarks, and were eager to propitiate her at least into leniency towards themselves. As she looked around at the profuse floral decorations, she snorted with rage, and turned to Maude, saying: “Perfectly disgusting, such display! I never saw anything like it. Simply ridiculous!” Then looking at Eva, and pretending to lower her voice as if it were intended for Eva’s ears alone, she said: “Poor child! Do powder your nose. It is a perfect beet.”

The house was filled with hundreds of guests; music floated softly from an invisible band, and the hum of eager voices was heard everywhere. Presently a stir began, and amid that subdued hush which indicates expectancy, somebody whispered loudly: "It is Mrs. Van Buskirk, I wonder how they will take it?" and many eager eyes turned toward the door.

Mrs. Van Buskirk came in, three masculine satellites accompanying her. She was a woman of voluptuous beauty. Her black curling hair was gathered high on her head, and in its darkness shone a coronet of diamonds. Her skin was neither dark, nor fair, but soft, warm and glowing, shading from creamy tints into brilliantly red cheeks and lips. Her white shoulders were more than generously displayed, but Mrs. Van Buskirk seemed not to mind, and her escorts appeared well pleased. Her gown of red satin was overhung with tulle, and floated and hung and swayed round her beautiful figure as if caressing its enticing curves. Scarlet, flaming red from head to foot, she stood as if encased in flames, the diamonds on her breast and head like sparks of fire. Her head was thrown back, as she stood a moment in laughing conversation in the doorway, that all might see her entrance.

As she advanced towards the hostess, her

black eyes rested on Eleanor for a short moment, then turned and fastened themselves on Manning. A smile hovered round the beautiful mouth, made for ardent kissing, and a world of burning, glowing love, seemingly sprang into life and irradiated her face, now like a siren's calling to the heart of the man for whom she longs.

Eleanor saw the sudden response that sprang into Manning's face at the open challenge of the woman. "Shameless!" cried her outraged soul, but sternly repressing the outraged feelings that struggled for freedom, she turned to greet the woman looking into her eyes with smiling insolence.

When Mrs. Norton remarked aloud as Mrs. Van Buskirk passed her, "She is out in character to-night, 'The Scarlet Woman'," her companion, an old grey haired man tittered aloud.

Mrs. Van Buskirk turned to meet Mrs. Norton's attack her eyes sparkling with the enjoyment of her retort, "They say that the beautiful bride resembles her father. Is that so, Mrs. Norton? You doubtless remember him best," and laughing at the old woman's enraged face, she entered the ballroom.

Meanwhile, half way secluded from the crowd, behind the partly drawn draperies of a large window, stood Charles De Witte, the cele-

brated painter of female beauty. His face was fairly aglow with delight as he watched his hostess: "What beauty! What a joy to paint her!" A woman turned her head, laughing: "Can you do it better than her maid, young man?" she inquired, for it was Mrs. Norton, whose rancorous tongue seemed ever ready tonight with venom-tipped remarks.

De Witte turned to her, and said warmly: "Mrs. Norton, I see you confound the craft of man with the handiwork of God."

"And you are reaching an age, Madame, when it would be well to familiarize yourself with some of His wonderful works," rejoined Dr. Bryan, another witness of the scene.

Mrs. Norton was the Doctor's pet aversion, and he was as cordially disliked by her. "How much about it do you know, if one might inquire?" she tartly responded. His reply was immediate: "At least enough to prevent my mistaking for it some objectionable products of his Satanic Majesty, when I meet them;" and with a profound bow, the old man passed on.

The guests began to leave, and in the crowded rooms it became easier to move about.

Mrs. Norton had missed Manning, and the bright spot of color made by Mrs. Van Buskirk's red gown. Somewhere, she knew, they

were together. Far back in the dimly-lit conservatory, was a small grotto-like corner obscured by screens of palms. Even the most indiscreet would have thought twice before choosing it as a rendezvous, but with the sureness of a bird of prey, Mrs. Norton sought it. A slight sound caught her ear. "I thought so," she exulted, and stood listening awhile, then boldly entered, discovering Mrs. Van Buskirk on a low seat, Manning's arms around her, as she rested against him.

In the darkness they could at first recognize her only by her voice. "Nice scene! very nice indeed! It's a great pity that you two married people should each be married to someone else."

"You meddlesome old devil!" Mrs. Van Buskirk cried, rising from her seat.

"Do you know by what name society calls you?" Mrs. Norton raved, her voice growing louder.

"For God's sake, Aunt Norton, don't make a scene. Think of the family. Don't speak so loud, I beg of you," Manning entreated.

"And I must think of the family, must I? How about you, William? Quite unnecessary for you to think of anyone I suppose. Your loving new wife for instance. How will she like an account of this? And your mother-in-

law, William. Think of your mother-in-law, and of her reproachful tears," her laugh was as full of maliciousness as of unholy glee. "To think of your falling from your virtuous married state—you, William, the possible father of a family! What an example!" She barred their way, and went on—"Have you thought what an example you are giving your wife? With her beauty, and the admiration of your men friends, do you not suppose she may have a chance to follow it?"

"For mercy's sake let's go. She can't do any worse if she follows us through the rooms preaching virtue," Mrs. Van Buskirk snapped.

"For God's sake, keep quiet, Aunt Norton, and you can command me in anything," Manning begged as he passed her, but he only received her assurance—"I'll be quiet as long as it suits me, William; you can buy some women, but you can't buy me."

The next day when Manning came down to breakfast, his face was sullen and his eyes puffed. He glanced at Eleanor, trying to guess whether or not his aunt had told her, but there was nothing in her face to show she knew.

Mrs. Howard never came down to breakfast, but Maude and Eva straggled in; Maude evidently in a bad humor, and Eva looking as if she had spent the night in tears.

"What's the matter with you? You both look as cross as I ever saw you," their brother asked. Maude made no reply, but Eva, afraid to remain silent, said, "I am sick."

"Better see a doctor." After a few moments, he went on: "Sick! So am I. Sick as the devil of this foolishness. I wish I'd never heard of the damned ball." He gave his wife a furious glance, indicating that with her lay the blame.

"Why don't you talk, Eleanor. Can't you do anything but sit there with that infernal superior smile on your face? Say something," he raved.

"Good morning," she said, and rising left the room. "Damnation!" was what he sent after her.

After breakfast, the sisters found Eleanor in the library.

"Are you not too tired to read?" Maude asked, sinking into a sleepy hollow chair.

"No, I am not so tired as I thought I should be. I slept well."

"Well, I didn't. I had a perfectly horrid night. I did not enjoy the ball in the least, besides, did you notice how many of the women were drunk?"

"I noticed some peculiar behavior," Eleanor answered.

“Well, I should think so; both Mrs. Van Buskirk and that Martin woman tried to empty every punch bowl in the house. Mrs. Martin reeled as she walked. Everyone noticed her, though she wasn’t the only one who took too much champagne. Mrs. Van Buskirk openly says that she only takes enough wine to make her feel good, and look pretty, but the only reason she is never very drunk is that she is drinking all the time.”

Eva chimed in, “I am sure, Eleanor, I can’t see how you could fail to notice the state many of them were in. It took three men to put Mrs. Martin into her carriage. I saw it myself.”

“Perhaps I am not observant,” Eleanor replied, unwilling to discuss the subject.

“I have often thought you so, but if after last night, considering all there was to see, your eyes are still closed, you are more than unobservant, you are blind.” While Maude spoke with unpleasant meaning, Eleanor only smiled, for she was learning daily.

An hour later, Maude alone in the library was absently watching the flames in the grate, when Mrs. Norton entered. “I took my morning drive, as usual, even though I was up so late, and thought I’d come in to see how you are. What is the matter? You look as though you had lost your last friend.”

"I couldn't lose what I never had," Maude answered moodily.

"Yes, you have one friend, Maude; myself. This, of course, is unusual, since we are related, but as you cannot interfere with me and I would not do so with you, we can safely be friends. I shall speak plainly to you. Are we in danger of being interrupted? Where is that girl?"

"She went for a drive from which I wish she might never return. I hate her."

"I know you do, and everyone else will soon know it if you show it as plainly as you are doing now. Have you any claim on Charles DeWitte?"

Maude's face crimsoned at this sudden reading of her secret. "N-o," she stammered.

"It is as plain as day that you are infatuated with him, and it is also plain that he is going to become infatuated with this sister-in-law of yours."

Maude was unprepared and her jealousy broke loose, as she sobbed, "Oh, I hate her! I wish she was dead."

"Yes, but don't be a fool. Do something; sit up and listen." When she had heard a complete account of her brother's stolen meeting with Mrs. Van Buskirk—

"But I don't see how this can hurt her, Aunt

Norton. You know she cares nothing for William," she urged.

"You don't? Then you have no sense. Can't you see that he is going back to the Van Buskirk woman, and that there is no telling how it will end?"

"Yes, but—"

"Don't say 'but' to me," interrupted her aunt. "We can break up this marriage if we go about it right."

"I don't care if she keeps William forever," Maude cried, again breaking into angry weeping, "if she only—"

"Poor fool!" Her aunt cast the words at her as though they were stones: "You mean she can have William, but that you want DeWitte. We all know that; but if you are not careful, she will soon have DeWitte and William too, and then where will you be?"

CHAPTER V

"A GREAT compliment was paid you last night, Eleanor. DeWitte wants to paint your portrait for the next exhibition," Manning said to his wife, as the family sat together at the luncheon table.

"How perfectly lovely," Mrs. Howard exclaimed, "and how envious all the women will be. Of course you said 'yes' William?"

"Yes, I thanked him, and promised that the sittings should begin at once."

"But I do not care for notoriety. I do not want a portrait of myself exhibited." Eleanor spoke for the first time. There was displeasure in her voice at being so lightly considered.

Mrs. Howard reached out a warning hand, at Manning's quick look of irritation, and she tried to cover Eleanor's displeasure by saying: "Of course, Eleanor, you wish the painting made."

"I intend to buy it if he will sell it, provided I like the work," Manning responded. Eleanor knew she must agree to whatever her husband demanded, but there was something that made her stipulate that Manning purchase it after the exhibition.

No one noticed the painful intensity of Maude's expression, or the eagerness with which she waited for Eleanor's reply. Like a burning match applied to powder, her brother's words had set on fire her smoldering jealous hatred. She rose before the meal was finished, and went to her room.

Since the scene with her in the conservatory, on the night of the ball, Manning had apparently forgotten Mrs. Van Buskirk, and gave more attention to Eleanor, but Mrs. Van Buskirk had not despaired. "I will give him a year or so," she said, laughing at his desertion of herself. The sight of a man devoting his time to his own wife to the exclusion of other women, she declared, was to her unusually refreshing, but she never failed to leave the poisoned hint that Manning's close attendance on his wife emanated from suspicion of her conduct. And all the time Eleanor beat against the network of deceit around her, and rebelled against her bondage to the man she now despised.

Alternately kind and unreasonably cruel; jealous over nothing, Manning seemed ever on the watch for hidden meanings in her every glance at other men; then in dejected repentance returned to her, declaring his unworthiness. Once he had told her in one of these

moods, "When you give me a son, I will be so happy, I will never again mistreat you." They were returning from a ball at the Overton home. Tired out, Eleanor leaned her head against the softly cushioned carriage, and was half way asleep when awakened by Manning's kisses upon her face. "Look up at me, my girl; look up and let me see your face. To think that you are mine, all mine," and again he covered her face and hair with passionate kisses. "Don't you see that I never have eyes for anyone else now, Eleanor! Of course, I know you know of the talk concerning Mrs. Van Buskirk, but there has been nothing between us now for—some time—and there never will be any more if you are good. I say, Eleanor, I want to settle down; have our own family; our own children. I am anxious for a son. I want my name handed down. I am the last of the family. Give me a son, and I will be your willing slave, yours and his."

"Do you think our life would be good surroundings for them, if we had children?" Eleanor asked in a muffled tone, while over her heart swept recollections of the many open insults and covert insinuations she had endured since entering this man's home, at his hands and those of his spitefully jealous sisters.

"As for that," he replied, "I promise you

now that when this happiness is mine, I will provide another home for Maude and Eva. From that day you shall have no wish unfilled; your mother shall be amply provided for, and you shall live in perfect happiness if my love, my gratitude and my wealth can secure it for you. Ah! Eleanor, I beg you, make me the happiest of men, and make me so, soon."

George Overton was a business man, engrossed in making money. Between him and the uplifted soulfulness of his wife existed little of the atmosphere she loved. She disdained his sordid occupation, and refused to interest herself in the details of his business, declining to sink to anything more mundane than freely spending the money he made. She was ever on the search for sympathy and understanding of her heart-to-heart communings; for one who might afford a safe and willing listener to the outpourings of her misunderstood and unappreciated soul. "Mrs. Oversoul," the jest of a sarcastic friend, fitted so well that the name was adopted. Her parlors, one afternoon, were more than usually filled, when Eleanor and her mother entered.

At one side stood Mrs. Van Buskirk, surrounded by the usual crowd of men. Among them was Charles DeWitte. As Eleanor passed

them, he remarked: "There goes the most beautiful of living women." Mrs. Van Buskirk turned to him a mocking face. "Do not throw away your admiration on that iceberg. Her heart is a desert waste; no man can live there." DeWitte audaciously replied: "Perhaps he who might have lived therein had been previously blighted in a more torrid clime."

In the laugh that followed, Mrs. Van Buskirk joined, for she was not sensitive. She turned to Robert Van Arsdale, crying in mock distress: "Rescue me, oh, Bobby of the curling locks, from the unjust attacks of this sharp-tongued slanderer."

Mrs. Overton, chatting with Eleanor and Mrs. Howard, heard the laughter, and cried, "Come over here, all of you, and tell us the cause of your merriment," lifting her great blue eyes appealingly to DeWitte's face.

"You wouldn't understand, it's all in plain English," laughed back Mrs. Van Buskirk, in an effort to keep DeWitte away, but as he moved forward, Mrs. Van Buskirk followed, her crowd trailing behind her.

Just as the women greeted each other, Bobby Van Arsdale turned to John Hilbrandt and asked, under his breath: "What is the difference between Mrs. Van Buskirk and Mrs. Manning?"

Hilbrandt, taking it literally, answered: "Why, by Jove, there is lots of difference. I don't think they are at all alike." Bobby laughed in glee, then turned to Mrs. Gordon Leigh, repeating his question. Propounding conundrums was Bobby's chief delight.

She answered quickly, "Why, Manning, of course."

"I love to have my conundrums guessed," said Bobby.

"Don't call that a conundrum, Bobby, a blind man could answer that."

"It is not fair," cried Mrs. Van Buskirk, "for you two to be whispering there behind our backs; I will not permit it."

"You wouldn't like it any better if we made our remarks aloud," half whispered Bobby, in laughing impudence.

A frown gathered on Mrs. Van Buskirk's beautiful brow, as the thought stirred, that perhaps they were beginning to laugh at her more than she would like.

In the short silence, Mrs. Overton grasped the opportunity to capture DeWitte's attention. Her hands clasped each other, her shoulders rose as she cried in her intense way: "Oh, that last afternoon in your studio! I can never forget it. My soul was lifted, and borne away

on dream wings to realms of joy. Let there be another soon," and her blue eyes clung to his, as if they would never release him.

DeWitte was surely not laughing at his hostess, but his mouth struggled hard with its desire to twitch, and in his eyes little imps of laughter danced, but "Mrs. Oversoul" did not see it. She heard her own voice, and in her ears it was always sweet. She continued: "Ah! for a soul like yours! What joy! Each thrill, each bound of your heart awakening to newer and grander achievements. We can but grovel and admire; adore and cherish the glowing spark that in you lives. Oh, say it now! Tell us that you will never withdraw it from our enraptured eyes. Say that the masterly work of your genius may ever remain our own, for our hearts are bleeding with your threat of leaving us for Germany." Mrs. Overton's face was raised close to DeWitte's, who stood for the instant, unable to reply. Then bowing low, he answered her in a laughing voice: "Then bleed no more, dear heart, for I have decided to remain to attempt to paint from the most lovely model in the world. With such an one, what man could fail?" As he spoke, he indicated Eleanor.

"Mrs. Manning!" cried Mrs. Overton, and her figure straightened instantly; all the ardor

left her voice, making room for the leaping green-eyed monster come to life.

"Mrs. Manning?" echoed Mrs. Buskirk; but her voice was calmer, and through its liquid notes, a ripple of malicious laughter broke. "Ah, indeed! does William know?" DeWitte turned to the speaker, in his eyes a warning to a more careful woman. "I owe my good fortune to him. It is through his request, that Mrs. Manning consents to sit for me. The only blight to my pleasure is that she has coupled her consent with the unkind condition that I must sell the picture to her husband after it is exhibited."

"So sweet of you, dear child," Mrs. Van Buskirk cooed to Eleanor, "to have thought of this for William. How he will enjoy the beautiful picture," and again she laughed, as she turned away.

On the homeward drive, her mother said: "Wasn't it funny, Eleanor, to see Mrs. Overton's and Mrs. Van Buskirk's jealousy when Mr. DeWitte spoke of the picture. I was so amused."

"Were you?"

"Why, didn't you notice it?" Mrs. Howard was surprised.

"I cannot find it diverting to see and know that everything and everybody is vile and base.

Most of the women we know are depraved; the men are the same. Everything is lost sight of except the one great struggle for position, place, supremacy and money; there is no friendship, nothing true or good."

"Why, child, what foolish words. Why should you care? Of course, the world is all alike, but you have everything to make you happy. They only envy you, and if you are very careful, I do not think that William will go back to Mrs. Van Buskirk. Of course, you must be cautious, and of late I have thought you were not—" Her daughter interrupted her.

"Do you think I care for that! What is he to me?"

Mrs. Howard broke in irritably: "Oh, Eleanor, don't talk so insanely. If you have not the sense to be thankful for all you have gained, I will be thankful for both."

In silence, Eleanor's thoughts ran on. What is the difference between us? Am I better than they? They live in secret shame with other women's husbands; I, in no less shame with a man from whom my heart turns in revolt. Is he in reality my husband, for whom I feel disgust, contempt and hatred? What is marriage? Is it this enslavement of the physical man or woman, which leaves the heart to search the

world, and freely take a dearer one, or is it ever a living bondage of true souls?"

When an envious woman makes gifts to the servants of another woman, it generally means that she is getting that for which she pays. As a rule, the more envious the woman, the more generous is the pay; but as Cleo left Maude's room, something round and shining in her hand, she muttered: "Ah! she ees steengy! Aixcep for me, what could she do? Ond but dis leetle piece for all I haf tole her. Eet ees as nutting, and eef dis ees all, I vill vatch no more."

Within her room sat Maude, a deep frown on her brow, her chin resting in her palm, her elbow on the table beside her. Before her were the cards Cleo had brought. "Charles De-Witte" was engraved upon them all, and the name stared upward with cruel distinctness into Maude's jealous eyes. The flowers came each morning, and Eleanor usually received them herself. She made no effort to conceal the cards which accompanied them, and Cleo had found it easy to collect them, and make it appear an important discovery when she displayed to Maude her hands filled with them.

Servants soon learn to read their masters' faces; their barometers of good and bad weather; and to convert to their own interests

the emotions mirrored therein; and the maid's agile touch played on the vibrating chords of her patron's jealousy, until she changed the jarring strains into song that was sweet to Cleo's ears, the musical tinkle of gold.

Since the commencement of the portrait, Maude had suffered all the pangs of jealous rage. Each time Eleanor left the house for DeWitte's studio, Cleo sought Maude with the information, and from her face gathered the knowledge that she had found her best market. "Eet ees to ze studio zat she again goes, M'amselle," Cleo began, returning an hour later, unable to relinquish the hope of an increased generosity upon her patron's part.

Then Cleo determined to make her grand stroke: "Eet ees to M'sieur you must go, M'amselle. Eet cannot be zat he knows of ze many visits and ze long time of zem zat she stay. Eet would ruin her eef him you tell of eet," and Cleo's eager eyes exhibited vindictive dislike for her young mistress, displaying as well, her perfect understanding of Maude's feelings.

Incensed already, and made more so by this assured reading of her mind, Maude spoke angrily: "You are insolent, girl. How dare you speak so to me?"

Cleo quailed under the angry eyes, until she

saw that the tears were not far away, and then began, speaking rapidly, her shoulders, up-raised, her hands clasped: "But ah! forgif me, M'amselle, eef I haf done not ze right, eet ees for you alone I speak. Wen I see zat your place she haf here taken, pushed you aside, and zat she now deceive you all, I cannot keep silent. Eet ees all for you. You haf to me been ze angel of goodness, must I zen keep all zat I so plainly see from your generous eyes? You, who are all goodness, cannot suspect. I haf see eet so long zat I but now forget myself. Ah! eef I you displease zen I despair. But, no more vill I speak; no, nefair vill I again offend. Wretched girl am I, eef you forgif me not, but my h-e-a-r-t, eet ees breaking! I cannot—no—a-h," and the incoherent voice was drowned in sobs, as Cleo turned to leave the room.

Maude watched her, until she reached the door, then called: "Come back, Cleo, don't cry. I do not want to hurt your feelings. You shall tell me what you like," but Cleo sobbed on: "No, M'amselle, nefair vill I again offend. Nefair vill I speak, eef I haf lose your lofe zen to me zair ees nutting lef! Let me go. My heart eet ees sad," and she laid her hand on the door, her shoulders shaking, her voice broken with sobs.

Maude knew she could not let her go, and so

did Cleo. Without her help, what could she learn of Eleanor's movements. There was, therefore, nothing to do but succumb to an unnatural generosity, and give to Cleo the reward she had earned. As she pressed the glittering pieces into the girl's hands, Maude's eyes were a warning, but Cleo cared nothing for that. She had her pay at last, and more than she had hoped for.

The smiles with artful slowness drove back her grief. "Eet ees not ze gole zat I care for; eet ees zat you vill not remove from me your precious lofe. I but take ze monie because eet ees from you. Always shall I keep eet. 'Always shall I lofe you, M'amselle. Your Cleo forever, M'amselle, am I. Ah! but my heart ees now again in happiness, zat you will forgif me."

With the door between them everything was changed. Maude sank back into her chair in sullen defeat. "That she should dare to speak so to me! How I hate Eleanor!"

Once outside, Cleo's black eyes seemed to pierce the closed door. The simulated grief was entirely gone, as she looked at the gold, and laughed: "Who did vin, M'amselle, you or I? I think eet vill be always Cleo," and she ran down the hall.

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"William, can you meet me in my sitting-room?" Maude asked her brother, as they left the luncheon table.

She was prepared for him when he entered, and indicated a chair near her writing desk, standing open.

"Well, here I am; what is it you want?" he asked.

"I want to ask you for something," Maude replied.

"Yes, so I suppose; that is generally the case with you and Eva," her brother laughed sarcastically.

Maude was on her mettle and began the attack: "It is my mother's portrait. I want it hung in here."

"Indeed, and why? Can you not enjoy it where it hangs?"

"No, I cannot; it pains me to know that it is hanging downstairs, in view of all it must see. Her face should not be there. Let me have it, I beg, that I may place it where no one with dissolute impunity dare insult the memory of her virtuous life."

"What the devil do you mean? Of whom do you speak?"

"I imagine you can guess, Brother William," she said scornfully.

"Speak out, Maude, be honest for once. It

may not hurt you. Do you mean that I insult my mother's portrait?"

"No."

"Then who?"

"Don't you know?"

"Do you mean Eva?"

"Of course not. The virtue of the Manning women is unquestioned."

"Then who in hell do you mean? Speak out, woman, I don't like this sort of thing." He rose from his chair and advanced toward her.

"Look on the desk and see if you do not find there some light upon the subject," and Maude pointed to the pile of cards.

"Charles DeWitte," he read aloud, "what of him? How did you come by all these cards, and what has he to do with it?"

"The cards came with flowers to your wife," Maude stated in fierce tones.

Manning's face suddenly grew dark, but for a little while longer he maintained a semblance of calm. "Yes? That's pretty hard on you, isn't it?" he sneered.

Maude burst forth: "How dare you, William! But you shall listen to me and know how often she is alone with him for hours at a time. There is a disgraceful connection between them. Are you no part of a man to countenance it? Behind the cold dislike she feels for you, she

hides her love for DeWitte. She loves him, I tell you; she loves him and hates you. She was with him to-day. She will be again to-morrow. She loves DeWitte, she loves him," and shaking with excitement and emotion, she grasped her brother's arm with both her trembling hands.

"Let go!" he cried, shaking her off, "you are lying, and you know it."

"I am not lying, she loves him; I can prove it. You shall see it."

Manning turned on her fiercely; "Prove it, you say? Then do so. Prove it—prove it—and you shall have your price," he cried half choked with rage.

In her fury, Maude had gone further than she intended, but unwilling to acknowledge this, she persisted: "I will prove it. Wait."

The days that followed were busy ones for Cleo. First of all she must gain entrance to DeWitte's studio, spying on Eleanor during the sittings. This was her plan: Under pretext of shopping, she left the house and knowing that DeWitte would never recognize her as Mrs. Manning's maid, applied to him as a model.

In this way she gained the knowledge of how to reach his rooms. Once within the outer studio, Cleo's quick eyes detected many

good hiding-places where she could watch them unseen during the few remaining sittings. The picture was nearly finished, and Cleo knew that she must hasten if she hoped to earn the large reward Maude promised her.

Soon after Eleanor left the house, Cleo followed her, and once out of sight of the house, called a cab, driving nearly to DeWitte's door. There she had no trouble, but telling the footman, "I am ze model, and M'sieur expects me," walked in unchallenged.

DeWitte's rooms were not the usual bare-looking ones of artists. In the first room, costly and exquisite hangings decorated the openings, rare tapestries and rarer paintings mingled with old armor and weapons in a strangely beautiful effect.

Behind the drawn portieres, hanging at the door of the inner studio, Cleo concealed herself. Her cat-like step was silent, and her soft dress made no sound. The curtains were long and loose, and among their generous folds she found it easy to hide.

Eleanor was sitting in the cold blue north light, that fell from the glass ceiling. DeWitte was at his easel, and on his handsome face, the fire of genius fought in deadly conflict with the counter fire of human love, human passion and desire.

Cleo had not waited long before she knew that if it rested on the man alone, she would gain the reward.

Suddenly he cried out: "I can never do it, I cannot. Oh! tell me, tell me why you change so. As I look at you now, I never want you to change, but while I look, I seem to see further and another being meets my eyes. You change to me at every look. I cannot paint you. I have your hair, your form, your dress. The face on my canvas is the lovely one before me, but Oh, my God! the eyes—your eyes, woman—I cannot paint your eyes. They haunt me night and day. They glorify the night, and shine before me like two brilliant stars, but when I look at their reality, my colors pale, my brush stiffens, my hand is numb, and my soul falls back in despair—" His voice sank almost to a whisper at the last words, and he hurriedly passed his handkerchief over his moist forehead. His pale lips were trembling, and he could not control his voice.

Eleanor rose from her seat and advanced toward the door: "Let me go now," she said, "you are working too hard. Rest to-day and to-morrow, it will all come right," and she soon was gone.

He did not accompany her to the waiting carriage, but as she left, he walked as if he still

saw her, toward the chair where she had sat, then back again to his canvas.

Silently, he gazed for a moment, then groaned aloud, "Oh, God, I love her! This is the woman! Give her to me. All I ask; this woman," and overmastered by emotion, he leaned against the easel, misery stamped on his face; the cruel misery of a hopeless love. Soon into his face the watching woman saw a strange look creep. His eyes grew more intense, till they were set in their deep, faraway gaze. "As I want her to look," he whispered in a strained, tense tone, and snatching a brush, began again with tender strokes upon the canvas.

Cleo crept out of the folds of the curtains with a happy face: "It will be for me," she congratulated herself.

Manning had been peculiarly disagreeable of late, and Eleanor had felt the insult of his insinuating remarks. Not once he spared her, and Maude's malicious eyes gleamed with satisfaction as she heard him. He persistently threw her into the society of other men, but did not disguise his suspicious watchfulness.

Mrs. Van Buskirk came often to the house, and in ostentatious display exhibited the peculiar influence, which she seemed to have regained over him. Eleanor's position was more and more unbearable. Manning's attentive-

ness had faded as the months passed by and there appeared no promise of an heir, and she realized that her hold upon him, which at best was but that of her youth and beauty, coupled with his desire for a son to inherit his wealth and perpetuate his name, was on the wane.

The thought was constantly with him, and when alone with her, his petulant reiteration of his disappointment made her more than ever hate and despise him.

In this frame of mind, it was easy for Maude to work upon his evil nature, and poison his mind against Eleanor, who he declared was spitefully refusing him the boon he craved.

Maude had been readily persuaded by the unscrupulous French girl that it would be possible to surprise Eleanor in a compromising attitude with DeWitte, for jealousy ever lends a willing ear to suspicious doubt; accepting as true, insinuations which reason and sanity should stamp as false; and after Cleo's vivid description of DeWitte's passionate absorption in the painting, and his evident admiration for his beautiful model, Maude was willing and eager to convince her brother that all that was lacking as proof of Eleanor's defection was to be unseen watchers of an interview between them, while DeWitte was painting her portrait.

There did not thrive in the Manning family

the idea of honor first; expediency after; and Manning decided that the end would justify him in adopting any chosen means. He therefore agreed to follow Eleanor to DeWitte's studio, and with Maude's help detect her in the suspected guilty love.

Maude's black eyes burned fiercely, and her face was frightful in its sallow pallor when they entered DeWitte's door. Fortunately this was hidden under her veil, but Manning had no such convenient mask, and his sinister look would have excited suspicion if Cleo had not paved the way. Her smiles and her ingratiating rewards had already secured for her plans, entire safety for the eavesdroppers. Pretending to believe in the clumsy excuse of an engagement, DeWitte's servant let them in, and they were soon advantageously secreted by Cleo.

From the folds of the heavy portieres they could see almost the entire interior of the studio, where DeWitte painted. The room was more vacant than the first and larger one, but no bareness was shown. The artist's love for beauty was displayed in the colors of the polished woods, the subdued tone of the few hangings and the burnished glow of the heavy copper boxes that held his painter's paraphernalia. Even his easels were massive and handsomely carved.

Eleanor had not arrived, and the delay of her coming seemed endless.

DeWitte was in the studio, and in evident eager expectancy. He paced back and forth like a restless prisoner. At the slightest sound his face brightened, his breath quickened, and alive in every fibre he awaited the fulfillment of his expectancy. To Manning, watching him, came the suspicion: "Has his man betrayed us? He is so restless. Does he know?" till reassured by the apparent absence of suspicion in the man he watched, he whispered: "No, he does not know, or he would be more careful. He shows too great interest."

At last footsteps approached, and two women entered, Eleanor and her mother. Over DeWitte's face a shadow passed. He had hoped that Eleanor would come alone, but he came forward, and in conventional greetings bade them welcome.

"Eleanor tells me that the painting is nearly done, Mr. DeWitte," and Mrs. Howard turned expectantly toward the covered easel.

"Yes, just one more sitting," he answered, but he made no motion to remove the cover and show the picture.

Mrs. Howard did not enjoy waiting during the quiet sittings and she suddenly remembered that she could attend to some shopping and re-

turn within an hour. Soon DeWitte was alone with Eleanor. "Shall we commence now?" she queried, in unconscious haste at something in his face that lately had not always been well covered or disguised.

"No need to. It is finished," he answered her, and stepped to the easel, laying his hand upon the cover. She interrupted him—"Then why did you not tell my mother?"

"Because I must have you see it first of all. I may as well tell you," and the words came fast, "but first look, then tell me if the picture is true;" and he snatched off the long cover, and laid bare the portrait.

She was painted in white. The dress was soft and filmy and clinging, and seemed to serve but to drape the slender young figure. One tapering arm hung in unconscious repose by her side. The other was slightly raised, as if in hesitant expectancy. The soft tones of the painted figure were marvelous. They made the painting seem alive. The head was slightly bent forward, the curling bronze-tinted hair piled in exquisite half disarray. The tints of the face were wonderfully lovely, the blue veins in the temple showed through the white skin, where it deepened into pink and creamy tones in the cheeks and to scarlet in the softly curving mouth, then paled again to purest white in

the neck and lovely rounded shoulders. But the art of the portrait lay in the eyes, which for so long had baffled him. They were Eleanor's large, dark brown eyes, but as you looked at them, they changed until they were not Eleanor's eyes. They were still large, and dark and brown, but Eleanor's eyes held in them no hint of gladness. They were not cruel, but they were cold; they were not heartless, but they were sometimes hurt; they were not sorrowful, but they were often sad.

The eyes in the portrait were glad, they were sweet, they were young, they were happy, they were alluring, they seemed to say: "Enjoy life with me. Come! Come! life is lovely; life is sweet; I feel it; I thrill with the joy of it; I love!"

DeWitte did not say a word, nor did Eleanor, but the man's breath was coming fast, his face was pale, his hand was tightly closed, and his eyes were fixed on Eleanor's face in eager inquiry, as if he sought to read her soul.

Still Eleanor did not speak, but gazing at the picture, a deeply troubled look came to her face, and she ended the long silence with a long breath, half sob, half sigh.

"Tell me," DeWitte whispered, and even then his voice trembled.

"I can't explain," she answered, and turned

to look again. "What have you done to it? It was like me yesterday, but not to-day. Oh! you have made it hurt me." Her voice was full of pain. "You make it haunt me with what I might have felt. Take that look out of the eyes, if the picture is of me. Take it out! I cannot look at it!" and all her training in self-control deserted her. She turned away, the scalding tears came slowly through her fingers, pressed tight over her eyes.

DeWitte, at her side, tried to loosen the protecting hands; his voice came back, and his words poured forth strong and fervent: "Dear one, do not grieve, do not despair; you can feel that way; you *shall*. It is a lie, this life of yours. Your true life is another, far, far different. Look up, and let me show you in my heart the love, no, the worship there for you. All this time I have loved you, idolized you, lived only in your sight. Outside is night; my cruelest despair. Look, Eleanor, see, read my heart. There is nothing in it a pure woman like you need blush to see. I love you, yes, I want you, yes. God only knows how much—*but honestly*—thank God. I want your love to open Heaven's gates, by just one word—say it—dear God, make her say it!—Leave this life of yours. It is a sacrilege; this daily torment. Everybody knows it; everybody sees it. Leave

it, it is but honest to do so. Leave it, and let me give you another and a better. Oh, Eleanor!—Eleanor!—*I love, I love you so—*” His voice broke and ceased, for on Eleanor’s face was depicted surprise, scorn and outraged indignation.

He tried to speak again—“Don’t, don’t, Eleanor—” but she lifted an imperious hand, and waved him back.

“Wait! If you have finished, listen to me. As you say, it is true that my life is a lie, a daily torment. You remind me that I am bound to a man I must despise—yes—but are you better? I came among you not two years ago, an ignorant unformed child, and what have I seen? Duplicity, deceit and outraged decency everywhere. There is no honor—there is no truth—there is no goodness. You are all the same. Because I despise him, shall I love you? I do not believe in your love. You do not know what love is. If you loved me, you would pity my ruined life, and would have been my friend—instead, you have leagued yourself with them to insult me. Never speak to me again. Let me pass.”

“Oh, God, Eleanor, don’t go like this; believe me—oh! believe me. I swear I mean no harm. Think—is it more decent to live with him as you do, because of the publicity of the

divorce you could so readily gain? Think of Mrs. Van Buskirk—think of that horrible Maude Manning. They will triumph over you yet, I warn you, it will come; they will triumph. Then leave it now before they do. You do not know, child, you cannot fathom their meanness, their deep duplicity and underhand knife thrusts. Maude Manning is a devil in woman's form, and Mrs. Van Buskirk a shameless woman. Be warned, I beg—I can make you so happy—I will—I will—”

“I will not listen; let me go. Let them triumph. Friendless I came—friendless I can remain. Let me go.” She moved again toward the door, and with a sweep of her arm threw aside the portiere.

DeWitte sprang forward, and tried to bar the way, begging: “Tell me you do not hate me.”

“But I do, I hate, I despise you all!” and imperiously she motioned him aside.

As the curtains swept back, a man's small shining foot was visible. Eleanor saw it, and turning, pointed. She raised her eyes to DeWitte's face, and in scornful tones, still pointing toward the curtain, inquired: “May I ask if you have provided yourself with an invisible witness to this interview, in which you so eloquently plead in honor's cause?”

DeWitte could not speak. The scorn in her

tones cut him like a whip. He snatched back the curtain to disclose the hidiers, just as Maude and Manning stepped out on the other side.

“We came for Eleanor, and hearing voices waited a moment. We have just come in,” but Maude’s pale face, burning eyes and her rage-shaken voice belied the words.

DeWitte made no reply, but his look was eloquent of his contempt. It fell on Maude with all its force, and made her writhe.

Then Eleanor spoke, and her voice had regained its calm: “One might have known it was you two.” Her eyes traveled over them an instant, then she turned. “I think I will go. Doubtless you three may like to talk this over; good by,” and her laugh rang out, cold, mirthless and insulting.

At the sound, DeWitte’s face quivered with pain, and passing the others, he too left the room.

Manning turned, and in a savage snarling voice, began: “What in hell did you bring me here for? You are as big a fool as that damned little French devil, and between you two, you have gotten me into this.”

“Oh, William!” Maude sobbed, unable longer to control her tears.

“Shut your mouth, and learn to keep quiet. Every time you speak, you make a fool of your-

self. You have acted like an infernal idiot to make me come here with you. I only came to please you. I hope you got a great deal of satisfaction from hearing DeWitte's opinion of you. Doesn't he love you! Ha! Ha! Perhaps you will still want to run him down. Well, you are welcome to, but you will have to do it without me hereafter," and Manning grabbed his hat and made for the door.

"Don't leave me here, brother William," Maude implored, her face quivering with an agony of mortification and fear that she might again meet DeWitte, "He might come back."

"You are safe from him. Don't be afraid. Ha! Ha! Ha!" his face was purple, his hands were trembling and cold, and his heart was on fire with rage, at the memory of Eleanor's plain description of her feelings for him. "I'll make her rue this day, the damned cold-hearted saint," he snarled.

When Maude found herself alone, she looked round her in furtive dread of DeWitte's return. "Oh, let me get out," she whispered, as she stole through the hall. Her form was trembling and shaking with sobs. As she walked out, the footman smiled with open impudence. She saw it, and thrilled with anger in the midst of her shame.

CHAPTER VI

DURING the days that followed, there was little peace in the Manning household. Maude's mortification changed to fierce resentment, and she redoubled her energies to render Eleanor's life unbearable.

Mrs. Howard had heard from Manning a highly colored version of the scene in the studio. "You should have been more discreet than to allow Mr. DeWitte to speak so openly," she complained to Eleanor. "It will simply ruin us if you are not more careful. William intimated that he is thinking of a divorce. Just think how awful! It would kill me. How can you so harass me with this constant uneasiness about our future. If I had to go back now to the misery I suffered before your marriage, I should die. As your father lay dying you promised him to look after me, and this is how you do it. You make my life a constant dread of evil. There is nothing William refuses you. Poor William! You nearly drive him crazy with your indifference. He is beginning to be suspicious of other men, and you have only yourself to blame. If you would only be a little

more womanly. Oh, Lord! why should I have such a heartless child?" and Mrs. Howard sought relief in a deluge of tears.

"More womanly! Am I unwomanly because my heart shrinks with disgust at the deceit and selfishness around me? Am I inhuman, because I hate where I am hated, and despise where I meet insult? If so, let me be inhuman to the end. It is my only joy, this hate I feel. A divorce would be happiness, a glad release from the bondage, which has degraded and insulted me from the first. Yes, I promised my father to care for you, and I have, I will. I will work, I will slave, I will struggle that you shall have your luxuries; but do not ask me to endure this horrid life. Let us give them their divorce. Let us go to ourselves and have our existence, untainted of them. Oh, mother! mother! be my friend—just this once, I beg. Grant me this, I have so little. Think of Daddy, and let him plead for me. Let us go away—mother."

Eleanor sank to her knees beside her mother, the tears streaming down her face, and clasped her mother's hands; only to be shaken off petulantly, as Mrs. Howard cried out: "You are insane, girl; give up now that we have secured all this? No, you shall not, you do not know what you say; you are wild to think of it. Here we are and here we will remain. You

will learn in time that I am right and will thank me for refusing to listen to ravings. Get up; dry your eyes; end this silly talk; treat your husband as you should; he can take everything away from us. Do as he tells you, and all will be well."

Eleanor rose and faced her mother. All the pleading left her face; all the softness, all the youth. "Eleanor, these scenes must stop. You must learn to curb yourself. Be a woman, not a silly child. Respect me, and change your course, and you will thank me in the years to come."

For a minute Eleanor's eyes searched her mother's face, then she laughed harshly and coldly. "Then let me begin to learn. Let me be like others, and when you see the woman you make of me, may you be proud of your work. From this day, from this hour, I will learn. I will be as the rest. I will meet their insults and insinuating thrusts; they shall feel my cold steel in return. I will meet the men and women who throng this house from now on with a smiling face. If my heart is stifled by a weight of pain, my face shall smile. If I am again 'inhuman, unwomanly,' it shall be in secret. In my heart shall lie my sorrow, since to you it is only a complaint of silly childhood. Rest assured, mother, to you I shall complain no more."

As Eleanor went out, her mother's eyes followed her in inquiry; "She looks so strange," she murmured, "I wonder if she really meant it. She is too impetuous. I must keep her under. It is insane to think of leaving him. I simply could not do it. She must be crazy to imagine I would. She must stay."

Maude had showed embarrassment under Eleanor's gaze at their first meeting, but hate had steeled her heart, and she returned a look of sullen dislike to Eleanor's sarcastic smile, as she took her seat at the table. It was Manning's first meeting after the scene at the studio, and his face purpled at the remembrance of her words. Eleanor had learned the lesson. Her pose was defiant. Her face seemed to say: "At last I know you. Keep your distance, but feel my scorn, my contempt and my hatred."

Under Eleanor's eyes Manning's temper grew worse. Finally he burst out: "Are you all struck dumb? Can none of you say anything?" As he spoke, he cast an angry look at his wife.

Slowly she turned her eyes to his, and with a strange smile, answered: "If I thought it worth while, I could say many things." Manning's face flushed, and he snarled: "These infernal airs of superiority that you are so fond of assuming do not add

much to your attractiveness, I can tell you." Eleanor shrugged her shoulders for reply.

Emboldened by her brother's ill-natured remarks, Eva turned to Eleanor. "Are you sick? Mrs. Van Buskirk said the other day that you looked half dead."

"No, I am not sick, thank you; my health is good. Perhaps my imperfections are more visible to some eyes than to others," smiling straight into Eva's spiteful face.

Maude came to Eva's rescue: "I believe you think you are perfect, in every way, Eleanor," she sneered.

Eleanor did not flinch under the concerted attack but looking directly into Maude's face, answered: "Oh, no, not perfect. These surroundings would make perfection impossible; but I consider myself as fairly respectable and there are a few things I still refuse to do; lying, slander, bribing and eavesdropping, I leave to others. My great crime is that I live in their atmosphere, and with shame I plead guilty to the charge."

Maude was furious; rising, she demanded in a voice which shook with rage: "William, will you allow this? Can't you protect us from such insolence?"

Manning looked at Eleanor as she sat toying with her teaspoon. Her face showed no sign

of temper, and she returned his look as if she were totally indifferent as to what he might do or say. Angered at her words, and feeling keenly their application to himself as well as to his sisters, he would have resented them, but something in Eleanor's face held him back with the unspoken thought: "She is right. She is above it, and if we go too far, she might make trouble."

"Don't drag me in. Fight it out among yourselves. You women are like cats, anyway; always at each other's throats."

Maude left the room, her breakfast almost untasted, and Eva followed her. Left alone, Manning could not resist the impulse to reprove his wife. "I wish, Eleanor, you would try to refrain from quarrelling with the girls. It does not make them like you any better, and it upsets everything."

Eleanor answered slowly, "Is it quarrelling with them to speak of decency? I had not considered it as strictly quarrelling."

He grew more angry. "Now look here, I am tired of this. If I am all you say, remember it is my money that took you out of poverty; but for it, you would now be working for your living. Remember this, and respect it, if you don't respect me."

"Perhaps you are right. Your money is

what gains for you consideration. I must remember it. You and your money are so closely interwoven in my mind that it is impossible to forget either; but do not ask me for respect, which is impossible."

Manning's voice quivered with rage. "What do you mean; how dare you speak so to me; you are in my power. I could throw you back into poverty and want. Do not go too far. If you are as cold as ice, I am not. It is my right to watch you, and I will, whenever it suits me, if that is what you mean. While you are my wife, I am your master, and I will control you if I have to do so by force. Remember this—you are mine. I have bought you, paid for you. The clothes you wear are mine. I will do with you as I please. I will force you into obedience; you shall come under my will if I have to beat you into submission," and his eyes, blazing with fury, his face purple with rage, his hand upraised as if in violence, he started toward her.

Eleanor rose, waiting for his fury to culminate. She spoke no word, made no motion, but her eyes expressed more plainly than any words could do her fearless scorn and contempt for the man before her.

Suddenly he stopped: "You are trying to provoke me. You want me to resort to vio-

lence, that you may have an excuse to leave me. You shall not. Mine you are, and mine you shall remain, but you must not continue to provoke me."

When Eleanor reached her room, the stern restraint was loosened, and there arose within her a torrent of hate toward her persecutors that shook her soul. Like fierce demons it gripped her heart, and wrung and tortured it. Lost in the storm, despairing of escape, no helping hand outstretched to her, no comforting voice, no consoling thought, her aching heart closed in despair, shutting out forever the tender thoughts and gentle impulses of girlhood, making her hard, making her cold, making her disbelieve in everything on earth, and almost in the goodness of God.

CHAPTER VII

“WILL you put your trotters in, Manning?” asked Dr. Bryan, discussing the horse show.

“Yes, I guess so; Maude is wild about it.”

“Who will drive?”

“Either she or I; she, if she has her way.”

“How about your black, will you put him in, too?”

“Well—you know, I don’t own him now,” stammered Manning.

“No! I hadn’t heard. Who bought him?”

“Mrs. Van Buskirk.”

“Manning, you didn’t do that, did you? How it will set the talk going! I’ll bet my head she drives him just for impudence.”

“Well, I’m trying to get her not to.”

“As well try to keep the devil out of mischief. You know she will. Why don’t you break with her? You told me when you married, that you intended to live straight.”

“Well, now look here, Doctor, you don’t know Eleanor. She’s the devil to manage, and to tell the truth, that’s the reason I came to see you to-day. I’m getting awfully tired of this kind of thing. I’ll just tell you plainly; I want

a family, but Eleanor—well, I hardly know how to describe her conduct. She never says anything, and I don't know what to think of it, but I'm getting discouraged, and I want to see if you couldn't say or do something."

"I, say anything! What can I say? It's your fault if you don't have children, not Eleanor's. It's your early life. I told you that you ought not to marry."

"Oh, such damned nonsense as that won't go. I know that's not so. It's Eleanor. She doesn't want them. I've promised her everything; to send Maude and Eva away; stop Aunt Norton—and the Lord knows that ought to influence her, for she hates them like poison, and they hate her worse—but never a word or a promise can I get from her. I thought if you would talk to her; tell her how much easier it would make her life—she loves you—you are the only one she does love—she will go through torment for her mother, but there's no love there; just a stern sense of duty—but for you, it's different—her face shows it when you come near her."

"Do you love her, Manning?"

"Oh, I love her well enough. I was crazy about her at first, and I'm proud of her. She's the most beautiful woman in town; she's the best dresser, and I'm perfectly sure of her

virtue—in fact, I’ve seen it tested,” and Manning laughed shortly, “but she’s so damned cold. When I talk to her, she is ice. I tell you, Doctor, I’d give half I’ve got, if you could put some sense into her.”

Manning was nervous and embarrassed; he walked up and down the room while talking, not noticing the look with which the old man followed him. When he stopped at last, and looked up, the old man shook his head. “It’s no use, Manning, it’s no use, it’s your own fault, there won’t be any such thing for you.”

The horse show soon engaged the attention of social New York. Everyone was interested, either in his own horses or in those of his friends.

Manning was a great lover of horses, and for several seasons his had been prominent and successful competitors in the horse shows. The beautiful black that had won the blue ribbon the previous year was his especial pride. Mrs. Van Buskirk, with all his other acquaintances, knew this, and she had set her heart upon possessing it, desiring the horse no more than to display her influence over Manning. He had given it to her, and she had determined to drive it during the show. She had lately devoted her time to trying to gain sufficient

control over the tricky big black horse to dare to drive him.

Reared in Manning's own stables, he was docile under his master's hand, but often unmanageable with strangers.

Extremely unwilling that Mrs. Van Buskirk attempt to drive, Manning begged: "If you are determined to enter him, Louise, let your man drive. I tell you King is unsafe in your hands."

"You are afraid of the talk, I believe," she answered. "If I can stand it, you should be able to."

"Perhaps so, but I'd hate to see King kill you. You know the horse never liked you, and it was always a mystery to me why you should want him. When he was a colt, he bit you as you tried to pet him. He is not safe for you. I will give you any other horse you choose, if you'll let me have him back. Be reasonable, Louise. When you know you can do anything with me, you might give way to my wish in this. Let me have King, or at least promise not to drive him next week."

"I'd rather drive that horse than all the others in your stable. Everybody knows he is your best and your pride. I simply must drive him. I wouldn't fail to do it for the world. Think of the faces of the spectators!" and Mrs.

Van Buskirk's voice thrilled high in amused delight.

"By George, Louise, one would think you had had enough said about us, not to court more," he grumbled, unable to share her mirth, but she only laughed. Laying her soft white arm around his shoulders, she rested her face against his, and asked in teasing seductive tones: "Growing faint-hearted, are you, dearest? Isn't it just a little late?"

Under her spell, Manning always fell, and it was not long before he had given his consent. As he fastened the glittering diamond bracelet round her soft, warm arm, he was laughing with her. He had brought it to buy her off from her declared plan of driving King in the trotting class, but before he knew it, she had persuaded him out of his scruples, as well as his bracelet, and into her own reckless disregard of consequences.

Mrs. Norton had not been to the Manning house for several days, and when she came, her whole attitude and expression seemed to say: "As well tell me what you've been doing. I'll find it out anyway."

Eva and Maude hastened toward her with assurances of their pleasure at her coming.

"Of course you ought to be glad. I'm your best friend, but you don't appreciate what I

do. Some day when it is too late, you will find out that I am really the only friend you have."

Maude asked if she was going to the horse show.

"Oh, yes, I will go, everybody goes; besides I have heard of something I want to see."

"I'm going to drive the bays," Maude boasted.

"Is that so; did Eleanor want to drive them?"

"No, I guess not, why?"

"You seem so pleased, I thought you must have outwitted her in some way."

"Oh, no, she doesn't seem to care anything about it. William secured the best of the boxes, but I heard her say yesterday that she did not care whether she went or not."

"She'll go," remarked Eva. "Madame La Marque told me that the clothes she had bought for it were perfect dreams, and she will go to wear them, and spoil the show for the rest of us."

"William suggested to her to drive or ride, but she said she didn't care to appear in public with some others who would drive. I know she meant the slur for Mrs. Van Buskirk and me," declared Maude.

"Where is she this morning?" asked Mrs. Norton.

"Out somewhere with her mother. We are never together now. She treats us as if we were the dirt under her feet, and Mrs. Howard is so entirely taken up with enjoying William's money, that she thinks of nothing else."

"Have you a box, Aunt Norton?" asked Eva.

"No, I thought I'd sit with you. The good boxes are so high, and I wouldn't have one of the back ones. I might as well save the money, and make William pay for my seat. He and his father have defrauded me of so much, that I can never get even, but I'll save this much, and buy that set of furs I've been wanting all Winter. You can just tell him I expect to sit there. Be sure you tell him, Maude."

"Yes, Aunt Norton," responded Maude, "I'll tell him."

"Well!" Eva said, when Mrs. Norton had gone, "we might have known it, we have got her on our hands again. The only redeeming feature is that she will make it hot for Eleanor, and that whining old mother of hers."

"But if Aunt Norton is in our box, not a man at the show will come about us. She insults everybody within half a mile of her."

"Well, we must keep her in a good humor,

and maybe she won't be so bad this time," Eva tried to encourage her.

"But you forget Mr. DeWitte will be there, and I should die if Aunt Norton said anything to him about what happened in his studio; and if she gets a chance she will do it or die. I'd rather miss the show than to be in the box with her," Maude wailed.

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The horse show had opened, and throughout the spacious arena at Madison Square Garden, an air of festivity prevailed. The boxes were filling rapidly, the chatter of the women, mingled with the men's deeper voices in that all-pervading murmur of humanity by which we know that the moment of expectancy has arrived. High up among the rafters rang the unrestrained laughter of the shrill-voiced "rooter," waiting for the opening of the show. The promenade was thronged with early arrivals, and the crowd constantly augmented by newcomers, was greeting and being greeted by those already there. Across the tanbark hurried the anxious exhibitors, eager for a last word to the pompous ring men, who strutted about with grandiloquent airs of importance, as if conscious of personal responsibility for the success of the whole affair.

Thousands of lights shone radiantly across

to the other thousands, returning their bright gleam; lights were everywhere; expectancy was everywhere; the past was forgotten; they were living in the present. The show was on.

The judges came to their stand. The boxes were filling. The people already filled the lesser seats. Hundreds of diamonds winked back at the sparkling lights. Fans fluttered. Smiling faces bent in salutation to friends in nearby boxes. The world and his wife—his numerous wives, were there like human butterflies, sporting in the breezes of the summertime of life.

The tanbark cleared, and the master of ceremonies awaited the coming of the high-stepping steeds and their higher-living masters.

The Manning box was advantageously placed, nearly opposite the judges' stand. It was large and spacious, but there were few vacant chairs.

Mrs. Norton was gowned in soft lustrous black velvet. The heavy folds hung round her like her own dark thoughts. Across her chair lay the exquisite furs purchased through her economical forethought regarding the box. She sat in upright acidity beside her patient husband. His fat face, though not carefree, wore the meek expression of the habitual peace-maker. Afraid to smile openly, for fear of be-

ing misunderstood, he cast furtively deprecating glances at his wife's alert face and bright darting eyes, searching for a convenient victim. Mrs. Gordon-Leigh and her daughter, Mildred, sat beside them, chatting with the old man, who would have enjoyed their gay talk but for the dread of his wife's criticism. "Just so, just so, he! he! he!" he chuckled, responsive to Mildred's remark that the horses would soon come on. His wife turned: "What's so funny about that, John?" she demanded. "A-h, nothing, my dear, I was only thinking how nice, er—that it—did not snow," his face straightening like a small boy detected in a forbidden joy. As Mildred giggled, the old man cast at her a pleading look.

Dr. Bryan sat by Eleanor; her mother on her other side. Manning's chair was vacant. He was below with his horses. Eva sat at Mrs. Gordon-Leigh's side; her face painstakingly enameled, and if her nose was more rosy than when she left the hands of the expert masseuse, she was not yet aware of it.

No living woman was ever absolutely unconscious of her own beauty, though she may possess the great charm of seeming to be, and Eleanor noted the stir her appearance created; the craning of necks and the half audible remarks on every side.

In Mrs. Overton's box, immediately to the left of Manning's, was a large party of her friends. They were laughing gaily as the Manning party came in. Beyond the Overton box, Mrs. Van Buskirk held her court with two women, who served as good foils to her striking brunette beauty. She made a glittering spot, visible throughout the crowded space. Her dress was black, but so far from somber that one lost sight of the dark hue in the sparkling brightness of the whole. She was like a scintillating black diamond, from her throat to her trailing skirt. Her lace robe, a glittering spangle of jet; at each turn of her lithe body the facets shone brightly; even her steady breathing, gently moving the soft lace above her breast, made an ever moving radiance, until the eye was dazzled. Her black hair was surmounted by an immense picture hat of black lace and long, loose plumes that reached back, and swept her shoulders. "An exquisite picture in an ebony frame," remarked Bobby Van Arsdale, as she took her seat beside him.

With the three women sat seventeen men; young, middle-aged and old, but to-night there was, strange to say, among them no married ones, for few men dared attend the horse show with Mrs. Van Buskirk, if their wives were there to see.

Van Arsdale leaned across to William Ellis, sitting a little behind him: "Nice of Manning to get this box for us, wasn't it?"

"Yes, he's growing sporty again. He has nine horses on the tanbark, and I don't know how many thousand dollars in boxes. Have you seen his wife? She's a beauty, and can't she hold her head. She's a wonder all right."

"You bet she is," answered Bobby, "and perfectly straight, too."

"Oh, yes, too straight. Lots of us wish she wasn't," laughed Ellis.

Soon the eager cry was heard: "They are coming, look, look, oh, look!" and up above, the loud voiced rooters made audible their admiration.

"Gee, see the black! Oh, the bay's the winner! See how she steps. Ain't she a bird!"

Leaning from the boxes they watched; conversation languished, eyes were more alive, for interest in the horses was awake.

In they came, amid a burst of music from the hidden band that until now had sent forth subdued strains. The horses pranced round the ring, their arched necks and daintily lifted feet indicating their high breeding.

Round and round they went, their nostrils dilating, their tossing heads held proudly, while every now and then a triumphant neigh pro-

claimed the self-esteem of some equine aristocrat.

Women leaned from their boxes, and clapped their white gloved hands in praise of favorites capering below.

"Watch the Sloan bay. He's a sure winner." Bobby tapped Mrs. Van Buskirk familiarly on the arm.

"I don't believe it. I am betting on the chestnut sorrel."

"Ha! ha! you may choose men, but you can't choose horses," teased Bobby. "Save your money to back a better one."

"Well, I'll wager a hundred that my black wins the blue ribbon when his class is called."

"Your black! Oh, now, since when?"

"Well, never mind the when, the where or why," she laughed, "he's mine now, all right, and you'll see his proud head crowned with the blue when the judges call the award."

"Damned bold about it," Ellis whispered.

Then came the hackneys. Like clockwork one class followed the other. Scarcely had the horses reached the gate, before the next class came thronging in.

In the tandem event Maude Manning drove superbly round the arena a handsome pair of bays. Out of eleven entries in this class, the Manning pair easily ranked first, and the tro-

phy was hers. As she sat erect in her seat, her tailor-made gown displayed her good points, disguised her poor ones, and made her almost handsome. Her eyes flashed in happy pride, as the magnificent pair was reviewed, and the trophy awarded.

Then came the coaches, heralded by bugle calls. Round the tanbark they went, an old-time coaching print embodied into modern life and action. Here was such a well matched four as we rarely see; bright bays, leaders and wheelers alike in appearance and action. Next them moved another team, black as night, to a coach of bright magenta, a striking sight. The horses moved together in splendid style, but the judges' critical taste barred them out on account of the loud color note. Then came Manning's snow white coach, tooled by himself. It awoke loud applause, as it swung round the ring automaton like, under the touch of their master's hands. "Yes, yes, the trophy is his!" The crowd of men in his coach cheered lustily as they left the ring, the bugler sounded his loud triumphant note, and amid the waving of thousands of handkerchiefs, round after round of resounding applause, the horses tossed their proud heads, and again sped round the ring and out the gates.

Mrs. Van Buskirk had left her box to drive

the captious black horse, restlessly champing his bits below. The last event was called, and into the ring, the horses came again. Bays, chestnuts and grays, with here and there a darker horse. Conspicuous among them, the big black horse to the pronounced stanhope, in which sat the beautiful woman, handling the ribbons with debonair grace.

From the boxes the remarks came openly: "Did anyone ever hear of anything so bold!" "It is Manning's big black, entered as her own!" "Heavens! that's flagrant!" "How will they accept this?" Meaning glances flashed from box to box, as the stanhope and its occupant passed down the arena.

"Shameless!" hissed old Mrs. Norton, eager of voice, and loud enough for all to hear. She turned to Eleanor: "Poor child, to have this shown so openly. No wonder you couldn't enjoy the show. Too bad! Too bad! I shall certainly speak to William."

Eleanor struggled for composure, as for a moment she turned on her tormentor scornful eyes, then shifting them, as if she would forget Mrs. Norton's words, together with her existence, began to talk to Mrs. Gordon-Leigh.

Suddenly someone cried out shrilly from a box far down the line. The black horse had become unruly. A careless driver had scraped

a wheel, making him break and begin to plunge. He reared and pawed the air; then, at the unfamiliar touch of the whip, with which his driver desperately tried to quiet him, he snorted in rage, and broke from her control, the lines hanging loose, where he had snatched them from her hands.

Women screamed, leaning from their boxes, and men's faces began to blanch; grooms tried to bar the way, but the maddened horse rushed past them. The woman clung wildly to the rail of the vehicle, her face white with terror. The other entries in the event rushed out of the way of the plunging, uncontrollable animal.

Manning, seeing the danger, rushed down into the ring, calling out—"King! King! Stop, Stop!" and the horse, quivering in every limb, allowed his master to take him by the bridle.

"Get down, Louise, I'll hold him. This comes of your stubbornness," cried Manning, so excited that he called her by her name. Assisted by the grooms and the crowd of men that now invaded the tanbark, Mrs. Van Buskirk left the ring, and began a pitiful struggle to regain the mastery of herself, and to cover her mortification.

King was still unquieted, and would allow no hand to touch him but Manning's, who was,

therefore, obliged to lead him from the ring, and the show broke up in general confusion and excitement.

"Oh, let's get out!" wailed Mrs. Howard, anxious to escape the inquisitive eyes and remarks leveled at them.

"Wasn't it awful, Mrs. Manning?" queried Mrs. Overton, determined to hear Eleanor's voice, while the incident still lived.

"Yes, certainly exciting, but not so awful as if someone had been injured," Eleanor answered.

"How noble of your husband to risk his life," cooed Mrs. Sloan-Webb.

"Yes," answered Eleanor, "you know Mr. Manning previously owned the horse, and it was easy for him to manage it."

Down at Sherry's, at every table, Mrs. Van Buskirk's spectacular deliverance by Manning was the theme of gossip.

Bobby asked Will Ellis: "Did you see Van Buskirk? He was near the entrance, as she went out. He was full anyway, and the look he gave her wasn't pleasant, I can tell you."

"No, Bobby, he has looked ugly for some time, and somebody will get in trouble yet. Lord! wasn't Mrs. Manning cold and stiff? Wouldn't she be a wonder if she had any feeling in her? With all her beauty, her heart is

so cold that no one can interest her. Wouldn't it be great to see her wake up?"

"I tell you, Ellis, she is not dead, she will wake up yet, some day, and show a heart that is warm enough, and don't you forget it."

"Do you think Mrs. Van's circus trick to-night will bring it about?"

"Can't tell about that, but I'll bet Mrs. Van is done for this time. You'll see that from now on she will be numbered among the 'caught.' "

CHAPTER VIII

THE great rooms of the Loan Exhibition of Paintings, at the Union League Club, were filled with a babbling, tea-sipping, weary-eyed crowd. From the walls, sombre and grave portraitures gazed down upon the throng.

Upstairs there was more room. There hung old masterpieces mingled with specimens of the shrieking modern paintings now invading the realms of art.

Every now and then above the general hum was heard the eager voice of a new devotee expounding art, all unconscious that in her ardor, her young knowledge shone out like fresh varnish.

"S-sh-sh! Listen! this is funny," giggled Mildred Leigh to Bobby, as fragments of a nearby conversation floated to them.

"It reminds me of a beautiful statue I saw at the Louvre on my last visit to Paris," declared a richly attired matron, her jeweled lorgnette lifted as she scanned a canvas, where was represented that well-known struggling form unwillingly sinking into death's cold embrace. "Yes, it is surely the same," the shrill voice

declared, "but I saw it in marble at Paris. It is called 'The Dying Gladiolus.' I like it almost as well as another one called 'Apollo with the Devil's Ears,' " and unconscious of the spasms of mirth behind her, the new millionairess passed on further in quest of pleasure.

"That reminds me," said Van Arsdale, "of a story Ellis told at the club last night. He went that morning for a ride with Miss Austin, whose father made such a sudden fortune in sugar last Winter. She kept him waiting, but Mrs. Austin entertained him—vastly, too, from his account. Explaining to him the cause of her daughter's delayed appearance, she said: 'Oh! it is too bad that Annie is late for her ride, but she was up so late last night, and when you came she was still in the arms of Bacchus.' Ellis assured her of his full appreciation of the situation, and begged Mrs. Austin to allow the girl her time."

Two canvases hanging together attracted the attention of the gay group. Ranch scenes in Texas representing the annual Spring round-up of the herd.

The two paintings were palpitant with life. In one, the cattle crowded together in the center an almost indistinguishable mass of color and form, with now and again a lifted head waving angry defiance at man's restraint. On the con-

finer of the herd, the animals could be more plainly seen; one moving slowly along with indifferent serenity following his leader to unthinking doom, while by his side another reared his angry head, shook his horns, his glaring eyes and expanded nostrils expressing unwilling recognition of man's compelling force. Toward the left corner, a red steer pawed the dust, sending it skyward; his lowered head and sullen posture showing his wish to incite the herd to outbreak. Toward the disturbing element two cowboys dashed. The small lithe ponies stretched their limbs in that sweeping gait known only to the prairies; one rider, his bridle hanging on his horse's neck, shouting a warning to the molester. You could almost hear his: "Hi-ee!" as he waved his broad-brimmed hat; the hanging noose of rope trailed behind him. His feet in the stirrups raised him from the saddle as the horse came on. His fringed leather leggings were stiff from exposure and age, and his brown flannel shirt was open at the neck, around which was knotted a big red handkerchief, its brightness emphasizing the tan of his face and throat. His smiling face showed no touch of care or sorrow; an untroubled child of Nature set in his native realm, happy and free as the wind, asking nothing but his steed and life and action.

The companion picture gave another glimpse into this prairie life. The whole angry herd aroused, had broken from the men's control. On they thundered, led by the belligerent red steer, which pawed the earth in the other picture. His head was outstretched in the pride of his evil conquest, and in wild abandon of unrestraint he led the maddened thundering herd from the grasp of the outdistanced cowboys, racing behind them in a wild endeavor to overtake and turn the stampeded cattle.

In both pictures lay the level green prairie; the same golden sunshine poured down. The same violet shaded haze stretched far and wide, and over all, the deep blue sky bent its unbroken dome, unflecked by the passing fret of a single cloud. The two pictures, "Control" and "Unrestraint," breathed from the canvas great lessons, and before them, even the frivolous group were momentarily quiet; a few of them through admiration of the wonderful paintings, still fewer because they grasped the lessons taught, and the rest silent because the others were silent.

"What is the attraction down there, I wonder," cried Robert Van Arsdale, and as they turned to look, he added, "Let's go and see."

As they neared a new canvas, Mrs. Gordon-Leigh exclaimed, "Mrs. Manning's portrait!

It is DeWitte's new painting, and marvellously beautiful!"

Surely the judges had meant to place the painting advantageously, for the warm light fell upon it with a soft caress, as if even it loved the beauty of the picture. Like a lovely human soul bared to the inquisitive gaze of the world, the pictured woman stood, her face half raised, her eager eyes unconscious of their beauty; setting her apart, above and beyond the gaping crowd, who all unable to reach her soul could but stand and gaze, criticise and cavil at this unexpected glimpse of a woman's living, loving, throbbing heart.

As a man behind her caught his breath with a quick little sound, Mildred Gordon-Leigh turned to him with a spiteful laugh: "Would you recognize her?" she asked mockingly. "Have you seen her look like this, or does she keep this happy face for the handsome painter alone?"

Half a dozen women joined in the amusement that this sally provoked, until Dr. Bryan remarked in a half tone to his neighbor: "I discover the unpardonable sin. It is to combine with beauty the lost art of virtuous womanhood."

Another woman asked: "Do you think Mr. Manning will follow the example of Mr. Rochester, who last Winter had his wife's portrait

painted by this same remarkable gentleman with the faculty of unearthing hidden and unexpected beauty? When he saw the result of Mr. DeWitte's labor, he cried, 'A beautiful picture, but certainly not my wife.' 'I'm sorry you do not consider the likeness good,' DeWitte answered. 'No, it is not my wife,' the husband reiterated, 'and I hardly like to pay so much for a portrait which does not please me.' Then followed the suggestion that the painter reduce his price, at which, to show his scorn, Mr. DeWitte picked up a knife and deliberately slashed the picture into ribbons."

Here Mildred Gordon-Leigh's insulting laugh broke in on the recital: "Did you inquire if Mr. DeWitte would treat this painting with like indignity? Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

In her amusement she did not notice the look of confusion that had spread over the group until she glanced up to meet Eleanor's scornful smile.

She was truly not like the picture now, as she swept the faces of the group with her scornful glance, until it fell on Dr. Bryan, whose blaze-lit eyes seemed to scorch with fury the spiteful woman as she made her laughing jest, then to her soul a sweet voice whispered: "My good, true friend."

Just as Eleanor halted, Mrs. Norton and

Maude came up. The old woman raised her harsh voice with cruel distinctness as she asked of Eleanor: "Have you come, my dear, to see the wonderful painting so few can recognize? Is there indeed within you that feeling which the painter declares so boldly to have found? Are you not guilty of unkindness in hiding such sweetness from us, to lavish on one what all might love to see?"

At the words, Eleanor's face hardened with cold disdain. The bitter notes that had found a home in her oldtime happy laughter blighted it as she replied: "No, you are right; there is in me no likeness to this painting. Surely the look which excites you all to mirth is but a touch of fanciful imagery on the part of the creator of this unknown woman. It is impossible to imagine myself looking like that painting, surrounded as I am, for is there anywhere among the people we know, a single face that does not bear traces of the scars left by contact with envy, hatred and greed?"

"Hush, Eleanor, for God's sake, don't rouse her," Dr. Bryan whispered.

"Ah, indeed, you surprise me by exhibiting such intense resentment at the mere suspicion of an unsuspected happiness; the boon we all so fondly crave. My friends, 'tis truly said that 'Wonders never cease.' "

Mrs. Norton had gained her point; had provoked Eleanor into a show of resentment at the comment raised by the unwonted look upon her pictured face, and in the joy of it, she laughed cruelly.

The Sunday morning following found Eleanor in the generally unoccupied Manning pew, in the magnificent church. Just before the organ's first deep note was heard, then with the increasing louder swelling music, up the center aisle began to move the chanting choir.

On they came, the sweet childish voices of the well-trained choristers answering and mingling with the solemn notes of the organ in a grand processional hymn.

The white-robed choir passed her pew, took their places, and the service began.

The wonderful music thrilled her! Her throbbing heart repeated, and over again assured her: "Here is rest. Here is peace. Here inside the sacred pale of God's Church is a haven of comfort. Rest in peace, sad heart; lift up your drooping head; hearken to the sweet message of love. Be of good cheer. The trembling rainbow of promise begins to tint your clouded sky. With God's almighty hand outstretched to aid you, earthly sorrows fall behind. He can uphold, uplift, and bear you onward, till beyond their reach you sing

with that invisible chorus, join your feeble trembling human voice to that never ceasing, ever swelling joy-filled Gloria that shall echo down the ages, declaring God's love and mercy to redeem humanity."

What the clergyman said, Eleanor never knew. He stood in the pulpit, his palely interesting face gleaming in the subdued light that fell through the stained windows. His white hands and graceful gestures accentuated his priestly form, clad in his snowy vestments as he delivered his careful and well-phrased sermon.

Behind his scholarly figure, another shone, and from the pictured face in the window there seemed to radiate that wondrous peace past man's understanding, toward which we turn our eager hearts, to find an all abounding glory when once we really desire to find it. "Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden," ran the illuminated text around the window wherein the picture lay, and the gentle face seemed to repeat the message: "If ye yearn for love, if ye yearn for peace, if the waves of the world beat hard upon you, carrying you far out to the treacherous ocean of sin; then turn to me. If ye can but lift your eyes, lift them now to me. Arouse your fainting heart to longing for the peace and love I bring. Believe in me; I know

your sorrow, I know your pain, I know your heart-ache, I know your woe. I have felt them all, but I can refresh you, I can save you, I can—I will redeem.”

Again the organ spoke, and the acolyte in his scarlet robe lifted high the golden cross, the sign of man's redemption, and following it down the aisle slowly came the chanting choir. The upraised golden cross advanced, and in the light of it, the suffering woman lost sight of its bearer. “Just the cross!” she breathed, “help me, help me, help me.” Nearer, nearer still came the cross, shining radiant and golden. Eleanor sank to her knees, her eyes fixed on it embedded in a radiant halo, symbolic of its saving grace. On her knees, sobs shook her slender form, struggle against them as she would. “Save me, O Lord, in my dire extremity. Be to me the friend I need. Teach me, lead me, I will cling to thee,” she prayed.

“Yes, I will see him at once,” she decided on the swift homeward drive. “Surely, he, the man of God, can help advise and strengthen my faltering feet.”

For months past it had seemed plain that a separation from her husband must surely come. “You will lose every friend, reputation, money, position, all; oh! I had rather die,” her mother wailed at each fresh outbreak. “I beg you to

stand it until I am dead," she insisted, "let me die in peace," until her daughter's heart was torn anew between her outraged womanhood and her desire to care for, protect and defend the helpless parent dependent upon her.

As Ralph Whittington, the stately rector of St. John's, rang the door bell at the Manning home, he inwardly wondered if he could creditably extricate himself from this unpleasant position.

The social world soon learns to understand the circumstances of its various members, and few are possessed of more thorough knowledge than the rectors of the churches. The divorces, scandals, feuds and estrangements with which we engage ourselves, are to him an old story, often told, and to maintain a sure foothold on the slippery paths of popular favor, steering clear of the breakers of partiality, is an undertaking worthy of Machiavelian strategy. This was Dr. Whittington's pride; invariably to give each suppliant for the support of his priestly influence an unincriminating answer; keeping his own skirts clear. It is quite a task sometimes.

He understood the Manning situation with its many complications. Mrs. Norton's deep-rooted animosity, the equally bitter resentment of the Manning sisters, Manning's well-known

connection with Mrs. Van Buskirk—daily growing more flagrant—his insulting ill treatment of his well-nigh friendless wife, whose silly, weak and selfish mother hung to her, an irremovable incubus. He knew it all, and since Eleanor's message of yesterday reached him, he had carefully reviewed the ground, going over the resources of each. "I cannot offend the Nortons. The old woman is stingy, but their contributions would be seriously missed. The Manning girls have little to give besides what their brother allows them, but to turn them and his valuable influence against me would be ridiculously foolish. No, my advice to Mrs. Manning must be of the most conservative kind. Indeed, she must at all hazards be influenced against an outbreak. But I will accomplish it without incurring her dislike," and it was with the comfort of an unusual self-assurance that he rang the bell.

She did not keep him waiting. Instead, she was eagerly waiting for his coming, and greeted him in her private sitting-room. His pale face was filled with unctuous grace as he held her hand a short moment, murmuring: "I trust I find you very well, as well as very happy."

"It is because I am not, that I have sent for you," she answered with her oldtime straightforwardness. Then she told him her story.

The long recital of the woes heaviest to womanhood came in a torrent of heartbreaking words, with finally an appeal for guidance, a quavering cry for help. Could it be that he heard her aright? Did he indeed feel no more than the polite mask, with which he shielded his inward thoughts indicated, remaining all unmoved at the pitiful tale of suffering? At last he broke the silence: "You have, dear Mrs. Manning, allowed yourself to become excited. Your mind is overwrought. I am sure you will to-morrow see the mistake of the step you would take to-day," his softly modulated voice reiterated, after a careful recital of his narrow, commonplace views.

"You mean I should continue to bear it all?" she asked, in blank surprise at the lack of responsiveness he showed.

"My dear lady," he began again, "look about you. Here on every side behold the lavishness of the love with which your husband surrounds you. You doubtless misunderstand him. Can you not by your love and tenderness draw him back to you? You must try. You must bear the slight neglect, overlook all jealousy, forego suspicion, cultivate love, turn to him the other cheek if perchance he smite you. You speak of divorce; it would be the greatest folly, and besides the tide is against it. Look at the wide-

spread storm the very word brings forth. No, no, you must forego the thought." How much more he said, Eleanor could not remember.

"Is this your peace?" she hotly cried. "Is this your comfort? Is this the shelter you offer to sin-sick and suffering humanity? Your church condemns divorce, you say, yes, it is against the tenets of your faith, but a divorce is still a legal thing, as lawful as this, legalized slavery; this so-called marriage in which every fibre of womanhood is outraged, insulted and disgraced, where every day and every hour is a long drawn hell of miserable atonement for the ignorant sin of having taken that impossible vow to love and honor a pitiful wretch, to know whom is but to hate and despise. You recommend that I willingly continue my servitude, consent to this unceasing butchery of every finer feeling; that I withhold not my cheek to the smiter's hand. Have you tried it? I ask you, can you tell how it is done? Can you impart the power to smile when you receive the cruel cuts of the social knout? I have asked you for help, asked you for succor, asked you for support, and you tell me—'Go back to my slavery, to learn under the lash to bless the hand that wields it.' Then take your advice and go. Give to another form of being this Christian help of which you prate. As well tell the

starving, thirsting hind to turn away from the cooling forest stream as to say to me: 'Enjoy your servitude, turn back from your thought of freedom,' for I tell you now, I reject your advice, I turn with all my suffering heart from your temporizing phrases, which you call the comfort of the Church. Since this hope fails me, I will remain as I am until deliverance comes; then if it comes, even though the hand outstretched to me shall reek of blood or shall horrify the senses with the stench of scandal, if it does all this and more, I will blind my eyes to its repulsiveness, and gladly, yes, joyfully accept it."

CHAPTER IX

THE guests of Mrs. Overton's "Week End" were arriving at the handsome country home, her latest extravagance.

"I am glad to see them all, but I want to have a good time, too, and I can't if I have to stay in the house and wait for them," she explained, as she strolled over the green stretches of the golf links, here and there dotted with bright-hued players.

Mrs. Overton did not often play, but the links made entertaining easy and reduced the day-time part of it, to a minimum.

The noisy throbbing of a large automobile was heard and the machine soon came into view laden with a laughing crowd. As they descended at the door, Mrs. Van Buskirk cried: "This is modern life with a vengeance. No hostess, no welcome, no handshake; let's all go in anyway, and make believe we like it."

From her vantage ground in the pretty rustic summerhouse, Mrs. Overton's companion observed to her: "I see Mrs. Van Buskirk has come. Now things will happen," and they did.

Most of the group had assembled in the drawing-room, awaiting the announcement of dinner, when Mrs. Van Buskirk made her appearance. Her beauty had rarely been better displayed than by the geranium pink velvet gown falling in exquisite lines from its embrace of her very bare neck and shoulders. Across her bosom a slight drapery of lace was thinly spread, and a slender chain of diamonds in lieu of shoulder straps ran across the glowing flesh. Her dark hair was gathered high, and her smiling face typified youth, health and passionately enjoyed happiness.

Mrs. Overton liked Mrs. Van Buskirk. "She is sure to entertain herself and you," she explained. Mrs. Van Buskirk may or may not have noted the frigidity which her coming cast over the group of women standing together. If she noticed it, her laughter was just as gay, her anecdotes as witty as if she knew herself to be the most appreciated guest. At the rather boisterous laughter from the group surrounding her, glances were exchanged and a woman said in a half-audible voice: "It seems to me I'd like to be a trifle less visibly delighted."

"Then it is a fact that the Manning divorce will be?"

"Mrs. Van Buskirk acts like it," returned the first speaker.

“I can’t understand such effrontery, at least beforehand.”

The crowd must have been waiting for Mrs. Ross-Scott’s fiat as to Mrs. Van Buskirk’s social fate, for when she passed her coldly by, no woman in the house dared support her when Mrs. Ross-Scott intimated support and recognition should be withheld. In this case, she spared no pains to express her disapproval of the presence of the beautiful participant in the horse show festivities.

During the course of the dinner, snatches of talk could be heard, with every now and then expressions of astonishing candor such as would have brought a blush to the unsophisticated, if such an one were there. Mrs. Overton was far too experienced and wise a hostess to bring together alien spirits, and no one blushed.

Mrs. Van Buskirk saw the growing coldness, but her face showed no sign of it, and her laughter and wit were almost feverish. The men on either side of her were openly delighted, and indeed the rest of them all down the line of the table were so evidently entertained and interested, that to bring them back to their proper senses, the female members of the party must assume more virtuous austerity. When at the close of the dinner they filed back to the

drawing-rooms, leaving the gentlemen to the wines and cigars, each man followed the gorgeous figure in the low cut pink velvet gown, the last to disappear, with that undisguised admiration, to some women acceptable, to some others, insult.

“Jove! She carried it high,” cried Robert Van Arsdale, as the door closed.

“Yes, she made a hit here, but in there—oh, Lord!—when they are done with her.”

The following morning, when the golf links had reduced the crowd to half its size, and bridge tables were engaging the others, Mrs. Van Buskirk realized that these few days among her erstwhile friends would likely serve to determine her future fate, and almost desperate at the enforced knowledge, she grew excited and unwise.

The bridge players did not want her; that was evident. No one invited her to share her favorite game, eagerly as she desired it, and when wandering through the rooms, the reception accorded her was not the most inspiring. The golf links held no fascination for her; besides, the outside wind was cold, and her feet far prettier in dainty slippers than in stout walking shoes. “Shall I fail to profit out of this visit?” she asked herself, angrily, thinking of the bridge game in progress without her.

Not until evening did her time come again. She made her appearance clad in a gorgeous gown of orange-hued satin overhung with thin chiffon softening and subduing the shine of the underdress, a few touches of soft, brown fur adding the darker notes. Always exceptionally décolleté, to-night Mrs. Van Buskirk excelled herself, and her beautiful arms and shoulders excited wonder and admiration among her fellow guests. She wore rubies on her white breast, and the glittering jewels flashed and shone with life-like lustre as if tinged with the rich, red blood enlivening their wearer. Yellow; the daring color whose very wearing is a challenge when tinted to that shade. When a woman dons it, she has either passed the boundaries of prudence, or else she feels secure in the omnipotence of beauty.

A few minutes before the announcement of dinner, the drawing-room was the scene of the meeting of the members of the house party.

An awkward young millionairess, her coronet still unfamiliar to her head, stood talking to Mrs. Gordon-Leigh and Mildred. Near them DeWitte faced the door, a curious little smile upon his handsome face. They attempted to draw him into their conversation, but of late the popular painter had grown quite indifferent to the burdensome adulation so gen-

erally bestowed, and to his face had come new lines. Emboldened by the confidence of pre-eminence bestowed by great wealth, the rich young lady playfully remarked to him: "You must be proud of the stir created by your lovely painting, Mr. DeWitte." But being a newcomer into the regions of society, she was unable to appreciate the stir she had caused, by her chance reference to the now well-known painting. An angry flash came into DeWitte's eyes, and he turned to the girl as though he would annihilate her for her unlucky remark coming at just the wrong time, for Eleanor and her husband were by now well within earshot of them.

A titter from the listening women followed Miss De Smythe's luckless reference, but the amusement of the women and the man's resentment only bewildered her, who, anxious to please, turned to Mrs. Gordon-Leigh, and helplessly appealed: "What have I done?"

Manning sought Mrs. Van Buskirk's side, and his black eyes roved admiringly over the handsome picture she made, greeting him with pleased animation.

Eleanor knew that she had made few friends in this alien social world, and the knowledge had increased her air of aloofness, until she was almost antagonistic in her attitude. Always

proud and reserved, she had now become cold and hardened in her estimates of mankind.

“Your sister’s gowns are a continual revelation, Maude,” whispered Mrs. Gordon-Leigh, and indeed it was true of Eleanor. She was draped in soft creamy toned lace that fell in foamy billows to the floor. The bodice was of embroidery, and just escaped being yellow, while suggesting that vivid hue. The lace of the gown was priceless with exquisitely wrought golden embroidery. She wore a tiara of emeralds interspersed with diamonds. The same gems shone on her neck and arms, and to a string of pearls around her neck was suspended a tiny fan, sparkling with the same bright stones.

As Manning left her standing beside her mother, to join Mrs. Van Buskirk, Mrs. Ross-Scott turned to Mrs. Williamson, and remarked: “No light touches for him; you see, he admires and seeks the heavier tones. Strange that even in dress to-night they should be rivals, and that the faint yellow tints of the wife’s dress should be outdone by the overflow of the same color with which her victorious rival bedecks herself. Mark me, this scene typifies the final result.” Her companion whispered in a half pitying tone: “How sad for the poor young thing; but she does look rather cold, doesn’t she, and to

the victors belong the spoils." And as nothing succeeds like success, Mrs. Van Buskirk felt her spirits rise, and showed her pleasure at Manning's arrival, and from the glances following them after he joined her, she gathered future acknowledgments of her victory.

"Oh, Will! I am so glad you have come, I have been wild to see you all day," she exclaimed. "Come right over here, and tell me all the news, and what you have been doing." She held him until the dinner was announced, and as the meal progressed, indulged so freely in the wines, that towards the end it was plainly seen that she was becoming intoxicated. In her excitement and exhilaration, her glances at Manning and her remarks to him were too plainly eloquent of meaning to be overlooked. He was, happily for her, more drunk than she, and neither of them seemed to notice the stir their conduct made.

"Heaven help her!" groaned DeWitte, with covert glances at Eleanor's face. "How can she bear it—I would give my soul to gain happiness for her—while he, who has the right, does—this."

Mrs. Van Buskirk had overdone the thing this time, and there was no mistaking the fact, from the rigid and determined way in which the women of the party withdrew themselves

from her at the dance which followed. It was not, therefore, for her, the brilliant success for which she had hoped, when Manning's desertion of his wife had in imagination sounded her triumphant march to victory.

Hating Eleanor as she did, she had promised herself the pleasure of coupling the ignominy of the divorce, upon which Manning had now almost decided, with the scandal of an intrigue with DeWitte, for she said in no other way could she fully repay herself for Eleanor's undisguised contempt.

But contrary to her proud expectations, the moment of her humiliation was near. Most of the women of the party followed Mrs. Ross-Scott's lead, ignoring her presence in the most pointed manner. Her assurance even in her chagrin did not forsake her, and when the time of departure came, in lieu of other adieux from erstwhile friends, she sauntered unconcernedly over to Mrs. Overton's pet Pomeranian, sleeping on a rug, shook his paw gravely, and called out in a gay voice: "Good-bye, dog," then amid covert laughter from the men and stony glances from the women, she left the room.

CHAPTER X

SINCE Mrs. Overton's week-end party, the feeling of extreme unrest had been more than ever manifest in the Manning home. Mrs. Howard's bitter resentment of the scandal created by Mrs. Van Buskirk's bold disregard of appearances, found only one safe vent—Eleanor. She dared not complain openly at her son-in-law, and since complain she must, her daughter felt the full measure of her discontent, and the days were spent in unending repetitions of her lament.

Manning was not much at home, but what time he spent there was an unabated horror. He allowed no opportunity to escape of mortifying or enraging his wife. In the privacy of their home, he was openly insulting, and though he insisted upon her frequent attendance at social functions with him, it appeared to be mainly for the purpose of parading his unkindness and disrespect.

Eleanor rarely quarrelled; in fact, it was hard to engage her in any conversation in which he had part; but she had grown more callous to the opinion of the world, harder hearted,

more unfriendly and unfriended. The youthful warmth of her earlier manner had given place to the coldness of disillusionment and made of her that which any loving heart would hate to see the object of its love become.

One morning nearly a week after Mrs. Overton's party, Mrs. Howard, greatly agitated, burst into Eleanor's room, holding out in her trembling hands an open letter. "Just listen to this awful thing!" she cried in tragic tones. "William is going to divorce you—why, oh, why must I suffer so—why could I not have died in peace like your poor father! Divorced!—Disgraced!—Heaven help me—Let me die," and in a paroxysm of angry tears, and tumultuous excitement, she thrust the paper into Eleanor's hands.

"And did he write *you* instead of me?" Eleanor rose with the question.

"Read it! Read, and see to what you have brought me," her mother's smothered voice returned, and Eleanor read:

"Dear Will:—I beg you not to enter your plea for a divorce from your detested wife solely upon the ground of your unfruitful marriage. It is true that under the laws of the State, that is a legal plea, but why base your contention upon that ground, when her con-

nection with DeWitte gives you another, which makes it easier. It is common talk, and you should not have to bear the blame that will be visited upon you for putting her aside because she is childless, while she sits back in scornful assumption of virtue and goes unpunished for her insults to both of us. For you her face is filled with detestation, scorn and loathing. For DeWitte, she is all smiles and gladness. In your suit for divorce they should both be exposed to the fullest extent, and by so doing you will have the approval of at least all those whose friendship is worth having. I am glad to say that Van B. has gone and gone forever, and when you are free from your burden as I am now from mine, we will grasp the happiness so long delayed. I am as always, your devoted
“Louise.”

She read it to the end, and so quiet had she become, that her mother ceased her sobbing to look at her. Then, too exasperated to wait longer, she cried out: “Well, what have you to say?” Eleanor turned to look at her, and the selfish woman fairly gasped in sudden amazement at the blaze of indignation enveloping her daughter’s face.

“Where did you get this thing?” she demanded in a tone that cut like steel.

“He dropped it.”

“And you read it?”

“Of course, I read it. Do not blame me for my solicitude for you. Oh! that awful divorce. You have ruined us both, we will be disgraced, cast out—friendless. His money will save him, and we must creep off in shame, your position gone, and your character ruined. Tell me, Eleanor! Tell me, is it true—is there anything of this dreadful talk about you and De-Witte? If you love him, say so, and we will appeal to him to save us. Perhaps he might marry you. Perhaps—” But she was silenced by the imperious anger of the woman confronting her. “Stop! I command you. I will not be insulted so. My God! and even you, my mother, can believe these shameless lies. Oh, this hollow mockery of decency with which I imagined I had cloaked myself, has fallen apart and leaves me bare and shamed—if I were a courtesan of the deepest dye, I could not despise myself more than for being what I have been—wife to this devil who calls himself man—joint owner of him with that abandoned woman. Lash me, oh, God! Scourge me, for I married him, I lived with him, I was his wife, and I deserve my hell.”

Why is it that we seek the theatre? Is it to

see whom else may be there, to search the boxes, and note that our neighbor's wife and her friend's husband have found it a convenient meeting place, to observe the magnificence of the new people whose recent wild ride upon the steed of finance down the race-course of chance has won for them a glittering prize, or is it possible that we in reality enjoy the play, and intend to sit throughout the performance, interested listeners to new renditions of that un-mending theme, upon which half the comedies and more than half the tragedies of life are founded; human love, its frailties, its vicissitudes, and its consequences?

The Manning box was filled, as were most of the others. The scene was almost like a gala night at the opera for all round the glittering horseshoe the parterre boxes were filled with a brilliant throng glistening with jewels, happy or seeming to be, in the enjoyment of the social and financial pre-eminence. Maude and Eva Manning sat at one end of the box, while Mrs. Howard and Eleanor occupied the other end. There was a space between where Manning usually sat, but this night he was absent.

During the intermission of the play, the Manning sisters were happy in the visits of the men who came and went from box to box.

Mrs. Howard was visibly making an attempt

to appear natural, but Eleanor made no such effort. Occupied with her own thoughts, she made a striking figure of cold disdain and aloofness, vouchsafing but the barest civilities to those surrounding her. Oblivious to the gay scene, her thoughts centered themselves upon her suffering, which would not be banished. Over and over in memory she rehearsed the scenes of her past years. After consciousness returned to her yesterday, with its load of insults, ignominy and failure, and its crowning indignity, the recollection of the letter exposing the plan to befoul her reputation, defame her character, and thrust her out among men branded with an unjust infamy; she demanded an interview with her husband, and showing the letter, awaited his speech. In his surprise, it was slow in coming. She had forestalled him, and he knew not what to say. While she waited for him to break the uncomfortable silence, he stammered: "Well, well, you surely are not surprised," then as she still made no reply, he went on: "Your extreme coldness has convinced me that this course would tend to your happiness also." Still silence—then—"You hardly expect me to believe that you love me or object to my proposed course, do you?" At the direct question, and the assured insolence that crept back to his voice, Eleanor lost

her control and turned to him in fury. "Care for you!—I!—" and the scorn should have killed him. "It is not a matter of that, but I have sent for you to say that when once you dare lay your defiling touch on my reputation, once insinuate a breath of your lying scandal concerning me—that day you die; for if no other means avail me, I will kill you with my naked hands. Your brutality, and the hate I feel will make me strong enough to do it. To make of you in reality, what in my esteem you already are—carrion."

Angry at himself for being intimidated, yet unable to cope with her in this new guise, Manning sought his mother-in-law, where he found a very different kind of woman. She, too, was angry, but her wrath was of a meaner sort, and she was willing to accept whatever excuse gave promise of personal comfort. Her self interest made her listen to Manning's argument and she became his strongest support. It was agreed between them that no divorce proceedings would be instituted, if Eleanor would surrender herself, her individuality and her soul. True, this was not what they said, when they declared that wifely obedience was all that would be asked, and that in return she might remain in possession of the position he had given her.

“But you can tell her,” he snarled, “that unless she does come under, unless she does agree that henceforth I am master in this house, I swear to ruin her—I can and by God! I will, if I die for it—and turn her out penniless and disgraced—you will tell her?” and his black eyes glared.

“Yes, yes, William, I will tell her all. She must and will do as you say, but let me make peace between you. I can convince Eleanor; I will tell her she is wrong, but can’t you try to be a little more tender and forgiving? You do not understand her impulsive nature. A jealous woman will say many untrue and unwise things. She has suffered greatly over your attention to others, and you should make some allowance for what she says;” and Mrs. Howard found refuge in her ancient defense of tears and long drawn sighs.

All this, and more was told to Eleanor by her mother, and it came back to her mind, as she sat in the theatre box.

The lines of the play seemed half meaningless to her, though to force back into forgetfulness her own wretchedness, she tried again and again to concentrate her mind upon them. The play was: “All’s Well That Ends Well.” Bertram’s cruel letter had just reached Helena, and the woe upon the actress’ face struck

an answering chord of sympathy in Eleanor's heart, and she began to listen.

At first, the repulsed forsaken wife was filled with anguish, but there came a time when her great love set about to find the way to fulfill the conditions stated in the letter. She found that way, as readers know, and with their child upon her breast, brought to her feet the truant husband.

How strange a theme, and why should it cling? "Father to an unknown woman's child! 'Twas done in Helena's time!" Round and round, the thought revolved in her tortured brain, until at last the hopelessness of her situation shut out her finer thoughts, and made her forget her girlhood traditions of love and honor for honor's sake.

She realized that it was as her mother had said. The stony bitter-sweet path of motherhood now held out to her the only road to safety.

"If you but had a child!" her mother's wailing voice repeated, and the complaining tones came back again in persistent echoes. "*I will*"—she thought—"one might as well. My daily life with him is worse than this—it is the only way. They shall not push me down into the whirlpools of obloquy, and since by legal means escape evades me, tied as I am to

this physical fragment of a man—*I will, I say—I will escape—some other way.*”

The next day Dr. Bryan was sitting in his cozy library when she entered.

“Ah! little girl, this is a treat. How glad I am to see you,” but he quickly stopped at what he saw on Eleanor’s face. “What is it?” he asked, his voice losing its cheerful tone. Then Eleanor told her story—of the wrongs and cruelties; the hideous truths which her lips had until now withheld; then of the letter, and the dastardly plan to defame her. The old man bowed his white head as she proceeded, till the cold voice suddenly lost its tone of lifelessness, and strong and passionately she cried: “I am determined to submit no more; I have decided to protect myself.”

“Then you will file a countersuit?” he lifted his head to say.

“No, and neither shall they drag me through the courts, defaming me. It is the woman who always suffers; once divorced, the world declares her black as pitch, and I will not be divorced. I have paid my price, and I will protect myself at any cost, but in another way, Manning craves a child; for this he would crawl in the dust at my feet. I have resolved to have one, and I have come to you, my old friend, for advice.”

Dr. Bryan looked up in quick amazement. "Eleanor!" he gasped, "You! He!"

Eleanor laughed, and the laughter made him shudder.

His head fell, this time to the table. "Poor child!" he groaned. "Poor deluded child, you don't know?"

Eleanor looked at him, for a moment her face distorted with pain, but she shook it off, and laughed again. "Don't! Eleanor, don't laugh like that, you kill me!" the old man begged.

"Listen to me," she continued. "I am not the child you think me. I know what you mean, but I am determined."

When she told him her plan gleaned from the play, the old man groaned aloud: "My God! My God!" Eleanor continued: "As my only friend I have come to you. I am trusting you with more than life. If you refuse to help me, you drive me to another, who may not protect me. Think well before you deny me, for in God's presence I swear to do this thing; with your help, if I may, without it, if I must."

Silence fell upon them both. The old man's head was bowed; his frame was shaking with his sobs. Over the heart of each was black despair, for the old man knew her determination was unchangeable, and Eleanor had decided upon her course.

At last he raised his drawn face, hoping to see a sign of faltering, but her face was hard, determined, and rigidly set; her eyes met his in a way that told him plainly the hopelessness of opposition.

When he spoke it was in a hoarse whisper: "If this is your final determination, I shall not fail you now."

"Then do not delay," she answered.

CHAPTER XI

THE next morning Robert Van Arsdale and Gordon-Leigh were standing on the clubhouse steps when an old man passed by, his hat pulled over his eyes, despondency and distress visible in his gait and bearing. Something familiar caused the two men to look at him again. He did not speak nor even glance at them, but at the second look, they turned to each other in astonishment. Van Arsdale cried: "Dr. Bryan! By all that's great. What on earth can it mean? He looks dreadful. I wonder what has happened!"

"What's the matter with the old doctor?" asked DeWitte, joining them from the street. "I passed him just now, and I declare I hardly knew him, he looked so sad and broken. Have you heard of any bad news concerning him?" None of them knew the grief eating its way into the old man's heart; the bitter secret which bowed his head, and lined his face.

The long night gave him no rest. His letter of imploring protest to Eleanor brought only this answer: "I have decided; it is the only way of escape. I must have your help; do not com-

pel me to seek it elsewhere.” Pacing the floor in mental agony, helpless to liberate her from her cruel surroundings, and most of all, to deliver her from the enemy she had become to herself, he cried out in anguish of spirit: “Poor child, poor child; they have ruined your life, and now shall I help you to blacken your soul! Oh, my God! that I should be forced to this! That I must be the one to whom she comes with such a plea! Must I? Do I dare refuse? If I do, I only send her to someone who may betray her, and spread abroad her shame. Is this a greater sin than her life with Manning? How can I answer? I am not God, I cannot judge. He must do that. In her mother’s hellish barter for money, the daughter has been lost. Shall I refuse to her the aid she asks of me? They have ruined her life, but if I can, I must cover that ruin, and save her reputation. That perhaps I still may do. But, oh, Howard! Know with what grief I do this thing. How my heart bleeds, my soul sickens at the ruin that is wrought. Believe me, dear dead friend, and understand—and oh, God! support me through this awful time.”

In the end a dim light broke its way through the torturing doubts that filled the old man’s heart, leading him to a decision and a plan.

“John,” said Dr. Bryan to his faithful old

servant, brought with him from North Carolina, "Hal Gregory, a young gentleman from North Carolina, will arrive this evening. Be on the lookout for him, and see that he gets the very best there is in the house, for we must try to make his visit pleasant."

"Yes, sah; certainly, sah. Yo' say he is from Norf Ca'lina?"

"Yes, from Raleigh; you know his family. When we left there they lived across the street from us. His family are among my early boyhood friends—as good friends as I ever had, as good as any man need want. When my wife was dying, this boy's mother watched over and cared for her, and when all was over, spoke words of comfort to me. Do your best for him, John."

"Yes, sah, I will, sah."

And later John grinned his broadest welcome to the young man, as he ushered him into the room already prepared for him.

"'Member you! Yes, sah, I does! I 'members yo' pa and yo' ma, yes, sah! I 'members 'em all. Yo' wa'n't nuthin but a little tow-headed young un when me and the Doctah lef Raleigh; but we an' never forgot de Souf; and we ain' never felt much at home up heah. We lubs the Souf yit, and allus will; but when de Doctah los' his wife, he couldn' stan' it no mo'

dar, and we had to leab. Ri' now a mockin bird a singin' gibs him de blues; and honeysuckle, Oh, Lawd! he caint stan' it yit. But we sho is glad to see you, sah, we sho is!" and John hastened to tell the other servants the news of the young man's arrival.

"Caint you see he's frum the Souf?" he asked of Lizzie, the housemaid. "Jes' look how he walks; 'tain no common folks es kin walk laik dat. No'n deed; he's quality. Me an de Doctah, we's knowed his folks since fo de wah. We libbed at Raleigh whur he libs yit, and tain' no new fokes bout him. Git out de way, gal; lem' me watch 'em pass out de do. My! it looks laik de ole times," and John's eyes grew misty.

At the club, Dr. Bryan's handsome young friend attracted more than passing notice. His tall, finely proportioned figure, his handsome face, his polished manner and refined bearing set him apart from most of the men gathered there.

"Haughty looking fellow," remarked Van Arsdale. "Wonder who he is?"

"Southerner, I guess," Gordon-Leigh answered. "I heard the old doctor say he was the son of one of his boyhood friends. That accounts for the old man's paternal air. One look at them is enough to know that they feel

their superiority; just a little too darned aristocratic to suit me.”

But even his prejudice began to fade away under the charm of the young stranger's manner. “Deuced pleasant fellow, after all,” he admitted half sheepishly to Van Arsdale, as Dr. Bryan and his young friend left them that night.

It was a hard situation for the old man, and he cudgeled his brains with painful care to pave the way for the talk he had prepared.

After all, it was not very adroitly put, and his young friend turned to him in astonishment:

“Why, Dr. Bryan! It is simply out of the question! No one ever heard of such an abnormal situation.”

The conversation that ensued was long and earnest, for the young man was hard to convince, but the old man was determined that his plan once entered into, should be carried out.

With tearful eyes and a broken voice, he pictured a beautiful heart-broken woman, her innocent childhood, the death of her father, her promise to care for her mother, that mother's unreasonable demands, ending in marriage to a man she loathed and hated, believing it the only way to save her mother's life; his insane desire for an heir, his impotence added to his

cruelty and inhuman treatment, his unfaithfulness, and finally, the plot to ruin and disgrace her by dragging her into a scandalous divorce proceeding, and her appeal to him for help as her only friend and the friend of her father, his best and boyhood friend. Her determination to take the course suggested as her only way of escape, his utter failure to dissuade her, and finally, the dire consequences that would befall the woman, who as a child, he loved as his own; his promise to help her, and his dreadful disappointment if he now failed her.

“I can’t yet view it as you do, but for your sake I agree. The situation is certainly a novel one, and I like adventure.”

The doctor led his guest into a room and shut the door. In the darkness, Gregory felt the old man’s trembling hand upon his arm.

“Remember, boy, for God’s sake, remember, you have sworn not to attempt to fathom her identity. I swear she is a good woman—or was, before she married this reptile, who with his tribe, has ruined her.”

He flashed on a light, and pointed to a heavy hanging on the other side of the room.

“The door is behind,” he whispered, as he turned off the switch again. “There is no light—it is sunk in the mystery of a darkness you must not dispel—but *she* is there.”

Gregory strode across the room. For a moment he hesitated. Then the old man, waiting, heard the swish of the lifted curtain, and the soft closing of the inner-door.

“My God! My God!” he groaned, as he stole away. “My God! oh, my God!” and he sunk into a chair.

He groaned aloud: “Why did I consent? Why did I?” His stifling grief oppressed and burdened his heart almost to the breaking point, as he cursed his weakness when he yielded to her.

He did not know how much later it was, when a hand on his arm aroused him, and he raised a haggard drawn face to the man above him. “Damn it, sir, this is an awful thing. I regret most sincerely that I came here. She—by the Lord, sir, you have deceived me.” For suddenly a conscience had cried aloud, and to silence its clamor the owner turned to the bent figure of the old man, and spoke in tones, where resentment fought with censure: “I thought from what you said, sir, that she could not be a lady. You have deceived me, sir, I say, and I demand some explanation of this mystery.”

The old man jumped to his feet at these words. “Hush, boy, hush! Come out of here! You don’t know what you say; come out; my God! come, come!” and they left the ante-room;

the old man now the more alert and active; the other angered and sullen.

Tossing on his restless pillow, Gregory found no rest that night. Self condemnation and bitter blame of the old doctor surged through his mind in the long, dark hours: "Those heart-breaking sobs!" he murmured. "God! I shall never forgive myself!"

Dr. Bryan's will had never shown itself so strong as in his vehement refusal to his young friend's pleadings: "Never, sir, never! Remember your promise."

"Damn my promise, sir! How could I know that she was this kind of woman? How could I believe she was all right? Lord, sir! You don't understand! You *must* tell me. I *must* know."

"You never shall, my boy, I promise you. I would not tell you for my life or yours. Not for her own. Do you think I am not suffering? Then you do not know. I shall never cease to condemn my part in this, or to bewail my weakness in giving my consent. Do not ask me to complete the ruin we have so nearly made. By God, sir, you do not know me. The only thing I can do now, is to protect her name, and while I have breath, that I will do. Rage as you please, you are the one of the three to suffer least. We, she and I, can never recover what

we have lost. You will forget it soon, and class it in your mind among your gay wild oats, but it is not so with us; ah, no, I will never tell you."

"Then, sir, I go, but remember this, since you refuse me, I'll find that woman without your help." The old man tried to stop him, but the young one threw out a restraining arm, his angry attitude expressing his defiance. "Tell her this for me: She lives somewhere in the world, and so do I, and as long as I live, I am searching for her. You cannot prevent me, nor can she; as you have brought us together in your damned mysterious way, it shall be my task to find her; and when I find her—tell her this—when I find her, if she is what I believe that she may be, then she is mine."

CHAPTER XII

“EVA, I can’t understand Eleanor; there is something on her mind and it promises no good for us. Have you noticed her peculiar manner lately?” asked Maude, coming into Eva’s room one night.

Eva, combing her colorless hair, halted with her arm upraised. “The very thing Aunt Norton said to-day! What can it be?”

“I don’t know, but whatever it is, it means ill luck to us. When did Aunt Norton first notice it?”

“She said that for several weeks she had seen it coming on, in fact almost ever since the scene over Mrs. Van Buskirk’s letter.”

“That turned out badly enough, and just when it seemed to promise so well,” resumed Maude. “I could wring old Mrs. Howard’s neck. If it had not been for her, William would never have made peace with Eleanor, after the awful way in which she talked to him. That was indeed a scene to remember! How William cowered before her when she said: ‘I will kill you with my naked hands’; his knees shook

so he could hardly stand. I believe he thought she intended to do it right then."

"Well, I did, too. I never was so frightened in my life," declared Eva. "I sincerely wish she had, and then since they have no children, we would have gotten more than we are ever likely to have while William lives."

A few days later, Manning rushed into the house in a rhapsody of joy. He had just come from Dr. Bryan, and sought his wife, almost frenzied with delight, capering round her like an enraptured sparrow. "My darling wife, I am so happy, so happy," he reiterated. Intent upon his own extravagant pleasure, he did not notice the utter lack of responsiveness in her, for his mind was filled with joy at his discovery. "A son! It must be a son," he cried over and over to himself and to her.

A spasm clouded Eleanor's pale face, which even her strong will could not entirely conquer. "My precious angel, you are ill. Call the maid; send for the doctor! She must not be sick! oh, no, I could not stand it now. She must be well; she must be happy! somebody go; don't stand there like a damned idiot, James," raging at the hurrying servant. "Madame is ill! For God's sake send for the doctor! Go, you fool!" and he pranced more wildly in his anxiety than in his joy.

Eleanor interrupted him: "No, no, I am not ill. Do not send for Dr. Bryan. It was only a momentary pain."

"But, my darling, you must not have a momentary pain. You must be happy, and well. No, we must have the doctor, my angel. Go, James." But at the strange note in Eleanor's voice repeating: "No, I will not have him. I do not want him. I will not see him," while the blood rushed to her face, and crimsoned its surface, lately so pale, Manning terrified at her excitement, hastened to change the order and to assure her: "Then you shall not, my darling, you shall do just as you like in everything. Oh, yes, you shall have your own way. No queen ever had more willing service than shall be yours from this day. My darling girl, my precious wife, my dearest angel," and he murmured on in unintelligent rhapsodies.

When Mrs. Norton entered their sitting-room, her nieces rose in unison. Maude's face was filled with anger, and her black eyes shone wickedly. Her sister's face was bathed with tears, her swollen eyes and reddened nose vying with each other in point of color.

"Girls, girls, this is awful!" gasped the astonished old woman, hardly able to speak for rage. At the sight of her, Maude's anger cul-

minated in a rush of tears and Eva's ever ready flood broke forth anew.

"I could kill her! I could kill her!" Maude stormed.

Mrs. Norton looked on in silence. Chagrin and anger for once in her life almost silenced her tongue.

"Oh, Aunt Norton, what shall we do?" wailed Eva.

"I don't know, I'm sure, unless, as Maude so often suggests, you kill her," her aunt answered, and Eva, taking her literally, complained: "But William is going to send us away. He says the sight of us is unpleasant to her."

"Just think of being sent out of your father's home for her!" broke in Maude.

"Did he speak to you, Aunt Norton?" Eva asked.

"Yes, he said he'd like to have me take both of you to live with me; that he would make a very liberal allowance; but when I told him that I did not care to assume a task he himself was tired of, he coolly said that he would send for your mother's sister, and set you up with her. He says he is determined that you shall not stay here to disturb his adored wife. Ha! ha! ha!" and her laugh was worse than her words.

The sisters did not enjoy their aunt's visit.

Neither her manner nor her words poured any oil of comfort on the troubled waters of their distress, and when she was gone, they looked at each other with rekindled animosity. "Mean old thing, she is just like William. They both enjoy our grief and humiliation," they cried.

Eleanor did not often meet them in the remaining few days, of their stay, for it was decided by their brother that they go to their maternal aunt at once. When money speaks aloud, material things are quick to obey, and within a week the new home was ready, and with their soft-spoken, pale-faced and obedient widowed aunt, they took up their abode. Mrs. Roberts was entirely willing to assume the rôle of chaperone for her nieces in exchange for the liberal allowance so unexpectedly proposed by her hitherto indifferent nephew. When Manning told his sisters of his plan for them, and the cause of it, the storm of their surprised chagrin and anger burst on his head, until the glitter came to his eyes, and he let loose on them a counter storm of vituperation and threats, which drove them dumb. "Dare to say another word," he cried, "and I swear that I'll never give you another penny. You know I can and will reduce you to your pitiful annuity and make you live on it if you dare to open your mouths again." His wrath silenced

and frightened them until they accepted with a pretense of willingness the terms he offered.

After their departure, the stillness of the house was maddening to Eleanor's overwrought nerves, but this was not so bad as the delirium of her husband's joy. In her extremity of nervousness, he learned that he must curb his exhibitions of delight, and in lieu of that, he adopted the making of handsome gifts as a demonstration of his joy. Exquisitely rare jewels filled her caskets; costly laces ran riot in her wardrobe, and as a last proof, he increased her jointure to an independent fortune. But none of these things brought back the sparkle to her sad eyes, nor filled with interest her unmoved face. Colder than ever, apparently more unfeeling, she moved among them automaton like, as if oppressed by a deadly, secret woe; refusing all companionship, she withdrew herself, until those who watched her awaited, in dread suspense, signs of a mental collapse. But her strong will did not desert her, and the collapse did not come. The far-away look grew and deepened; she sat for hours, her hands idle in her lap, her eyes fixed in an unseeing gaze before her. Succeeding days brought no relief to her painful lethargy until Manning's anxiety amounted almost to madness. All his attempts at tenderness were

met by the same repellent coldness, holding him off alarmed and frightened.

“Do not distress her. Let her entirely alone. It will all come right,” Dr. Bryan insisted, but to Manning each day was an increasing agony, and they told on him with cruelty. One day as Dr. Bryan was leaving, he called him into the study, and closed the door. “I cannot stand it any longer, Doctor,” he whispered, “I could not bear to lose her now; this strain will kill me.” The doctor answered: “Wait a little while; a change is coming soon.”

One night Eleanor woke with a start. In her dream a tender arm was round her, a voice had thrilled her soul. “That voice again!” she cried in anguish. “O! God, send me merciful oblivion—shut my ears to that insistent sound. Silence that voice, O God! or I shall die. I cannot, dare not listen. It racks my soul; it tears anew my aching heart. Dear God, let me forget!” and she tried to smother in the pillows the sound of her sobs.

Does God answer prayers when He sometimes sends us anew the grief from which we murmur? To Eleanor this answer came.

Beneath her starved and aching heart that never yet was filled with joy, it began to thrill. In her stormy grief she listened; her sobs ceased, till almost afraid to breathe, she waited

for she knew not what. Slowly it came again; at first, merely a thrill, half pain, half joy; then her hand sought her heart in painful rapture at the now fully understood message. "Dear God!" she cried, "I understand."

Months later all was excitement in the Manning house. "Doctor, doctor, stop! I beg of you; tell me quickly how she is."

"All right, Manning. She's all right. Don't be uneasy," assured Dr. Bryan, himself half crazed with dread.

Through her half shut door, the sound of Mrs. Howard's weeping could be heard. "My poor child, she will die! I know she will die; and what will I do?" she cried over and over. As Manning entered the room, she dashed toward him and caught his arm, "Tell me, William, how is she? Is she dying? Tell me quickly. Will she die?" The man turned away; "Don't ask me that; I do not know," he sobbed aloud.

For Eleanor was now fighting a new battle, and as always, unaided. Dauntless and brave, she descended into the shadows of the yawning chasms of death, to peer therein, and find them peopled with ugly gruesome flitting shapes that mocked her agony.

The hours were long; the night seemed like a lifetime filled with pain; but after all, the day

came, and with it a weak little cry heralding that oft repeated mystery of life. Louder than the hammers beating into her tortured brain, she heard that little cry and forgot all else. "Ah!" she breathed, in a long drawn sigh of joy.

Dr. Bryan came toward her, and as he bent above her, his streaming tears fell on her face: "Your little son, Eleanor." He tried to conquer his shaking voice, and laid within her outstretched, eager arms, a sweet, soft, yielding bundle. Then God opened his Heavenly gates and flooded her heart with joy, engulfed her, lifted up, and bore her soul aloft in bliss most unalloyed. "My own," she murmured, "my dear, my own!" and tighter held the little bundle. It moved in protest at the too close embrace, and she loosened her hold to look within; two big, round wondering eyes met hers and then and there with strange, new, all-sufficing joy, the woman's soul was born; and mother greeted son.

"May I come in, Doctor?" a hushed but eager voice asked at Eleanor's door.

The old man looked at Eleanor, but she was all intent upon what lay within the hollow of her arm, and had not heard the question. "It has to be," the old man told himself, and looked again at the quiet figure, whose shining eyes lit

the pale face with the radiance of mother love that had stormed and captured the woman's heart.

Again the whisper came: "Doctor, let me come for just a moment; I cannot wait," and the door opened silently, admitting a softly stepping figure.

"What will she do?" the old man breathed, in dread of the effect on Eleanor, but she scarcely noticed him. Even when Manning leaned above the baby form, his breath coming quickly, his face twitching and pallid, she made no sign.

"Lift him up; I must see him," he begged the nurse. But when she bent toward the child to lift him, Eleanor spoke: "No—!"

Dr. Bryan laid his hand upon her arm and stopped the words before she uttered them. "You shall have him again, my dear," and he lifted the child and turned to Manning, saying hurriedly: "They are all that way at first; they do not like to have anyone touch the little fellows but themselves."

In his ecstasy, Manning forgot his wife's forbidding word and lifted a cautious, outstretched finger to stroke the soft, little, rosy face. At the touch, the baby yelled a lusty, loud objection, and Eleanor cried: "Bring him back to me; you hurt him." Though disconcerted, her hus-

band's laugh was yet a happy one. The little voice had thrilled him through and through. To cover his nervousness he coughed, and turned to Dr. Bryan: "Fine little chap, Doctor, fine little chap. I intend to trade you that property down the avenue for him."

The Doctor forced a laugh: "All right, and I'll deed it back at once to my little Godson, for Eleanor promises me this; and also that I name him."

"Oh, no, no! surely I'll do that," Manning stammered, but Dr. Bryan laughed again. "No, she and I for that, Manning; his name must be Joseph Howard, or we'll take him right away from you."

Weak with happiness, Manning gave in. "All right, Doctor, anything you say; just give me the boy, and name him what you please. Might I kiss Eleanor?"

"If she says so," the old man mumbled uneasily. Manning bent to touch her forehead, but she did not move her head. Her eyes again were fixed upon the wonderfully little atom that was filling her mind, her heart and her life with the strange new joy of motherhood.

Not long after, a crowd of men were standing on the clubhouse steps. "By George!" laughed Bobby Van Arsdale, as Manning hurried by them, "you have deserted us lately."

“Better things at home,” answered Manning over his shoulder.

“Funny to see the change in Manning, isn’t it?” remarked Hilbrandt. “It seems to be a mighty little cause for such great effect.”

Van Arsdale laughed again: “Yes, little, but that doesn’t count. It appears that in one gallant fight, Sir Knight, the Baby, has put to rout Manning’s entire collection; mistress, sisters and even the venomous old aunt have all gone down to this new foe.”

The men listened and laughed, and one said: “I guess Mrs. Van Buskirk is fixed for good. There’s hardly any prospect for her to climb the social ladder on Manning’s shoulders now; you remember her bold assurance at the last horse show? Pretty hard on her to tumble down so far, and fall so hard, isn’t it?”

“Didn’t count on the baby, I guess.”

“No, not she.”

“Well, Manning surely counts on him now,” declared Van Arsdale. “All I have seen of him for weeks is the twinkle of his shining little feet as he flies down the stairs, hurrying home.”

The next day they waylaid him: “How many teeth, Manning?” “How is the baby’s papa?” “What is good for colic, Manning?” cried a chorus of three voices.

"That's all right, boys, laugh all you like; you're only mad because you haven't one."

"Me! Oh, Lord, just listen to him! How his morals are perverted! Why should I have one?" cried Bobby, retreating from him.

They all joined in the laugh at Bobby's mock consternation, but Manning was too much in earnest in his new found joy, to care for what they said.

Gordon-Leigh's voice hardly concealed his envy: "Boys beat girls; know you're glad, old man."

"Yes, I am," Manning answered. "You know it's the rule in my family to make the sons the heirs, and I wanted my name to go down with my money."

"By the way, Manning, I hear you've already set him up," called Van Arsdale across the long table.

"Yes, I'll settle enough on him now, so that if I go under he will have something left," Manning replied.

"Something left! Well, I should say so! He made a new will and settled one million on his wife and fifty millions on the baby. I guess there would be something left," Hilbrandt told his neighbor.

"Phew!" whistled the man, "how much has he?"

"So much that he doesn't know himself," Hilbrandt answered, "and it's a positive sin the way he continues to make it."

"Lucky dog, I should say; beautiful wife, phenomenal baby and too much money. No wonder he hops around like a demented black-bird. It has gone to his head."

One day Manning laid a long, thick envelope on the table at Eleanor's side: "A little present for you and the baby," he explained.

She was holding her child in her arms watching its sleep, with eyes that never tired and did not open the paper.

"It is my will," he said.

"Yes?" she answered, still looking at the little face.

"Do you feel no interest?" he asked, his tone exhibiting some irritation.

"Oh, yes, but I was looking at him."

"Well, I'll leave it, and you can read it when you please. It makes you both very rich."

"Yes," she answered again, but still she watched the child, who had moved in his sleep, and thrown out one pink and dimpled hand as if clutching at an unseen phantom form.

Mrs. Howard, sitting beside the fire, looked up at Manning, and smiled: "He is talking with the angels, William. Did you see him throw up his hands as if to catch them, and smile in

his sleep? When a sleeping baby smiles, old nurses say that they talk to angels.”

“Well, I’d a lot rather he’d talk to me,” returned Manning, gazing down on him.

Mrs. Howard laughed again. “I’ve seen many foolish parents, but you two take the lead. You have almost deserted your club, your business and all your former amusements, while as for Eleanor, she can scarcely breathe away from the baby’s side. She sends the nurse away at night, and has him sleep in her own bed, which is bad for both herself and him. You see how she spends the days. I predict that before long this entire household will have become nothing more than one large nursery, while everyone in it develops into another servant for this young tyrant.” Manning frowned at her words, but Eleanor only smiled, her eyes still on the little face.

Mrs. Howard’s voice grew a little sharp: “It is nothing short of foolishness to shut ourselves up in this way. The baby will last. Why should we not have some of our old pleasures, as we did before he came?” and she looked at her audience. Eleanor still smiled, but when she saw that her husband’s frown had deepened into a decided scowl at her mother’s words, she said: “By all means, mother, go where and when you like. As for me, my pleasure is here,

and I have had it too short a time; it is too new and strange to leave it for society so soon." Her husband here joined in: "And I was deuced tired of the senseless gabble I heard everywhere before we had him, and I'm going to stay about him just as long as I like. Of course, though, as Eleanor says, we needn't keep you at home."

"I shall go out, then, as before, but I still think it very silly of Eleanor. No one does it nowadays. You'll see how very tired she'll grow," Mrs. Howard prophesied.

No answer, but Eleanor's quiet smile, as she held the sleeping child a little closer to her. "Tired of you, darling!" she whispered, when they left her, "tired of you!" and she laughed softly, "of you, my own, my heart and very life. Ah, no; not while the stars wink their secrets to us; the moon sheds her beams in silver shafts to lighten night's darkness, or the glorious old sun floods our daily walk with radiance as bright as our love. Tired, oh, no! Not now, that life has grown so sweet; not now, that each day is like a song of joy, each hour a bright gem in pleasure's diadem. As well tell the dying wanderer to thrust away the cool water of life from his parched and burning lips, as tell me to leave you, my little one."

The next day, in the nursery, Eleanor waited while the nurse prepared her son's morning

bath. The soft, rubber folding bath tub was filled with foamy sweet-scented water. The rosy, little child was enthroned in his mother's arms, waiting for the dip he loved. The nurse hurried about collecting and laying out in readiness the dainty little garments, the powders and soft, small brushes. Everything breathed of sweetness, but to Eleanor none of it was half so sweet as the warm, pink body of the little child. She held it close to her face, delighting in the satin smoothness of the baby skin. How soft and sweet he felt, as she rubbed her face against the little form. The child, looking at her, cooed his pleasure. She caught him close; and again, closer, closer. "O-h, darling! How I love you! How I love you!" her voice broke in half sobs of joy. "Mine! Mine! All mine!" Again he cooed. Ah! the music of the baby tones! Tears gathered in the mother's eyes as she held him close, hiding her face against him.

Ah! Eleanor, you have your joy at last, but does not the price you paid sometimes rob that joy of sweetness? The memory of a voice, the thoughts that surge round and storm your heart, refusing to be banished!

Her heart's painful throbbing stifling her, she cried: "Why need it be? Must I suffer this eternal expiation? Must I ever long for some

forbidden joy? Shall the sweetness of mother love be tainted by the bitterness of memory? Oh!—it is my punishment, and cruel as it is, I acknowledge its justice; for tortured now as lost souls must be tortured, I love, yes I love him; and I want—oh, God! I want my child's father."

But tears do not efface; a bitter wail cannot silence the tortured cries of conscience, nor regrets remove the consequences of sinful deeds; and in our hours of greatest joy, memory oft points a scornful finger to a blackened spot reminding us: "How dare you laugh, while yet I live, to place upon your joy my blighting touch!" In each man's soul there lies the sin-sick knowledge of his own unworthiness. It binds our souls to earth with chains of steel. We cannot sunder them; we cannot lift our hearts above their cumbering weight; but He, the maker of us all, can touch them with a breath, and lo! they break apart, and—wondrous thing—our hearts that lay beneath, blackened by sin, trembling with unworthiness, and bowed to earth with human helplessness, arise, and soar to Him on the spotless wings of faith, purified and healed by that eternal sacrifice that cleanses all.

Another day. Eleanor was standing at her open window in the early Spring sunshine, hold-

ing her little son in her arms, as her husband entered the room.

"I found this at Tiffany's, and I thought you might like it for the boy," he remarked, holding out a little box.

She opened it, to find two dainty diamond set sleeve clasps. "They are lovely!" and she clasped them on the tiny sleeves, disclosing the rounded dimpled arm. "Sweetness!" she cried, and bent to kiss the little elbow.

"If they could see you now, Eleanor, all would say the DeWitte painting was the most wonderful likeness in the world," the man declared in ecstasy at the lovely sight.

Eleanor tried to avoid her husband's eyes. At every caress from him, every touch of his hand, a spasm of pain or something deeper crossed her face.

Manning's domesticity became a standing joke among his friends, who laughed at it, and wondered how long this state of things would last. In his perverted nature, fad had followed fad, passion had succeeded passion, and pleasures once secured, soon lost their joy, to be pushed aside for the next to come.

"Eleanor, I often think you are jealous of the baby," her mother told her one morning, after Manning's early visit to the child. "You

never look very pleasant when William holds him, and I wonder that he does not notice it."

"I hate his air of ownership," Eleanor answered.

"Well, of all things! Hate to have the child's own father assert his rightful claims! You always had unpleasant traits, Eleanor, but this amounts to more than all," Mrs. Howard sniffed disgustedly.

"The child's own father! Oh, my God!" Eleanor's heart wailed. "I do hate him more and more. I loathe to have him touch my child, and when he kisses him, my heart grows hot and wild. Some day I shall betray myself. Some day this acting will fall apart, and my secret will disclose itself. But, no; for my darling's sake, I dare not. I must forever act a part; must seem to care for that which I most despise. But it is hard, so hard, to do."

"How fast he grows," she cried. "Three months to-day; three months of sweetness you have given me, my little boy. The dearest days of all my life are these I spend with you."

But who dare attempt portrayal of the joys of motherhood? Who can describe a mother's ecstasy; a small head pillowed on her loving breast; that throbbing source of succor to his helplessness? None need, for none but mothers know.

Daily, they grow more sweet, more dear, more lovable. Speak not with pity of the self-sacrificing mothers giving up each dear desire, each cherished pleasure, to stay at home, attend and care for the growing families that make the world. Instead of pity, grant them envy if you must, for surely in this world of ours there lives no other soul so filled with joy as that in partnership with God, who feels itself the source of life and comfort for the precious little baby souls committed to their care.

Five months had come to Eleanor's little son, and with the day, appeared a tiny pearl in rosy coral setting. The nurse said: "He has a tooth," and laughed in pride; but the mother knew it as a jewel that had come to earth, and fondly looked for those that followed it.

At eight months; see him totter on his weak, uncertain feet, while on her knees she begged him: "Come, dearest, come to me," and when he tried to come, she called again: "Come, come," to catch him; fold him in her arms, and cry in rapture: "His first step; oh, my dear, my little one, my own!"

CHAPTER XIII

“MANNING’S settlement on his boy is certainly an exponent of his fatherly love,” said John Hilbrandt, at the club, as he lay down the paper.

“Isn’t it!” rejoined Van Arsdale.

“Cut the two sisters up pretty badly, I hear; they say Maude has been raving ever since the news came.”

“Poor Eva,” laughed Hilbrandt, “I guess her nose will never recover from the traces of her tears.”

Van Arsdale’s laugh rang out again: “Too bad, too bad; one hundred thousand each, offset by a cool million for the wife. I wish I might have viewed the scene. I wonder if Manning had the nerve to break the news to them, or if he left them to find it out by chance. Poor girls; they won’t even have enough to buy a little Frenchman. Too bad, too bad,” and both men laughed again.

“Manning certainly has the ‘dust,’” Hilbrandt went on. “I hear that besides the million to the wife, there will be nearly one hundred million to descend to that one small boy. Great

Scott! It makes me faint," and he leaned back in a simulated collapse.

Van Arsdale grinned: "You could pay your debts on that, eh, John?"

Hilbrandt looked up: "If Manning were out of the way, I'd like to try for the million. By George! I wish I could," he added.

"Manning can't stand this strain long. Better be ready, John; faint heart, you know," Bobby reminded him.

"Too stupendous luck for me, and besides I couldn't stand to live in the house with that little chap. The temptation to kill him would be too strong. I guess I'd better not enter the race," he grinned. "But wouldn't it be a hot one?"

In their new home the Manning sisters had seen the paper.

"I simply cannot bear it," Maude cried, her face twitching with anger and grief. "Why couldn't he have died before that baby came?"

"It is awful," wailed Eva, "no one will ever notice us now. One hundred thousand! Just think! We will have to do on one maid between us, and you always keep one busy, Maude, you know you do."

"A million dollars for her!" and Maude's teeth snapped, "and all the rest of it, *all the rest of it* to that child."

As Mrs. Norton was announced, Maude started up in the hope of escape. "I will not see her," she cried, "she has only come to twit us with this awful thing." But her aunt intercepted her flight.

"Don't run away, my dear," in acid tones, "it is only I, and I have come to sympathize with you about William's settlements. He has certainly cut you and Eva out. I am so sorry for your poor luck, for surely I, more than anyone, know just why you shed these tears. I was defrauded by my brother, your father, and I know full well the chagrin which fills you now." They could not speak. "Poor things, they feel it keenly," she remarked, as if to herself, then went on: "Ah! me! I did not realize the influence of his wife, for of course, it is her doing." As she spoke, she cast on them a searching look. "Do you not think a personal appeal to Eleanor might avail to make him enlarge your shares?"

Maude sprang to her feet, her eyes darting fire. "What! Beg of her! Aunt Norton you forget yourself!" while Eva complained: "It would do no good; she would let him give us nothing more." The old woman's malicious face shone with her wicked glee. "Perhaps you might try, Eva."

"Are you thinking of the many times you

pleaded for more, Aunt Norton?" Maude cried desperately. The shaft went home. "How dare you, Miss!" she glared at her niece; but Maude, now thoroughly aroused, was quite her match. "How dare you?" she returned, her black eyes blazing, "you did it; on your knees you begged father for more than was given you, but I want to tell you once for all, that before I sink to that, I will step off the Brooklyn Bridge. True, I am your niece, but there the likeness ends." She left the room, and Eva had to face alone the old woman's insane anger. When at last she was gone, Eva sought her sister and dropped weakly into a chair. "Maude!" she gasped, "how could you? I thought she would die."

"I wish she would before she gets home to change her will," Maude answered. "That would perhaps have helped us some."

"Well, we'll never get it now," wailed Eva.

"Did she say so?"

"*Say so!* Heavens! If you could have seen her face." Eva's hands were trembling, her face was pale and even her nose was fading.

"I couldn't help it; she made me say it. I don't believe she meant to leave us anything anyway," Maude tried to reassure herself.

For some months Mrs. Howard had been failing, but no persuasion upon Eleanor's part

could induce her to forego the pleasures of society. She had become devoted to "bridge," and spent many hours of every day engaged in the game, first at one house, then another, and in this way used so much of her reduced strength that her health suffered perceptibly. "There is nothing at home but the baby," she complained, "and I must have some amusement."

But the day came when she was unable to leave her bed, and soon the doctors gave the verdict, "Double pneumonia—a bad case." With all her failing strength, she clung to Eleanor and was never willing that she should leave her bedside. Night and day, she watched and ministered, foregoing more than glimpses of her boy. "Can't the nurses do all this?" Manning urged, noting her tired face. "You should save yourself for the boy."

"The doctors say that additional excitement will kill her," she explained, "and as she is always begging for me, I feel that I must stay."

"It will not be long," said the doctors, and Eleanor continued her service. After a long hard day and restless night, the sick woman opened her eyes. "Why don't you do—something—for me? I am sick—so sick—so sick—but you—do not—care," she quavered.

"There, now, be quiet, and you will feel better," urged the nurse.

"I will not. I'm tired of being quiet," the weak voice complained. "Lift me up—lift me up."

"No, no," from the nurse. "Do not excite yourself; you must not, you must obey me."

"I will not," the thin voice rose almost to a shriek. "I will," and she lifted herself quickly, before they could prevent her. "Oh!" cried the dismayed nurse, "you must lie down," but too late; the cruel strain had broken, and with a half-strangled cry, the sick woman fell upon her pillows. Her face, lately flushed with fever, turned a violet hue, and she was suddenly quiet.

"What is it?" Eleanor cried, bending over the bed, frightened at the rapid change.

"Be brave, Mrs. Manning, she is dead."

All that day, the words beat into her brain. "She is dead! dead! dead! She is dead!" Through all their persistent reiteration, they seemed half meaningless. "What is the reason?" she asked herself, "am I so heartless that I cannot grieve for my own mother? She is dead." But the only answer was that precise repetition of sound: "Yes, dead; she is dead!"

"It was the shock," they said, as they lifted Eleanor to the bed from the floor where she had fallen. When at last she was aroused, she

found the house closed and quiet. The servants passed on tiptoe through the darkened rooms. Death had covered the place with his gloomy black pall, and the majesty of his mysterious presence hushed every voice, and silenced every step.

After her mother's funeral, the quiet house oppressed Eleanor. Upon her heart lay a heavy weight that even the baby wiles of little Joe but half drove away. With self-reproach, she acknowledged that the source of her unhappiness did not lie in her mother's loss. "I am distressed; of course I am. What woman could fail to be?" she mused, but there her sorrow ended.

Little Joe crept to her side, and with all his might pulled on her skirts, demanding notice. She looked down at him, then stooped, and lifted him in close embrace. "What if the day should come that he should feel like this towards me?" She shuddered at the horrid possibility, and in her heart was registered the vow that "whatever the future brings, never while I have breath to refuse my consent, shall my child make for me the sacrifice of youth and love and all its rights, for by such things as these love often chills and dies."

Six months passed, and in that time Eleanor's face showed plain traces of the cruel pressure

under which she lived. Manning loved the child with as deep a love as was in his selfish nature to give, and found delight in tracing resemblances to himself in each of the beautiful features of the baby face.

This pastime almost maddened Eleanor, but Manning was too engrossed to often notice the anger on her part, or if he did, attributed it to "her woman's jealousy."

"To think that you could look like him," she panted, searching the little face, and thinking—thinking—thinking—

"I'll leave him in your hands for a little while, but when he outgrows his babyhood, you must then turn him over to me," he told her one morning, when she had asked him not to interfere with the outlined routine of the child's life. "You are positively spiteful, Eleanor," he declared another time. "It enrages you to see how much the baby loves me. It is disgusting to me to see a woman act as you do but you might as well realize that your jealousy shall not separate me and my son."

"*Your son*, oh, my God! *Your son*. Never! He is mine, all mine," her anguished jealous heart repeated, still thinking, thinking, thinking—

"Eleanor is not well, she needs a change," Dr. Bryan told him, and Manning, fearful lest

the boy lose his mother, agreed to send them away for several months with the intention of joining them later on.

One day the servant brought a card: "Mr. Avery LeNoir," she read. Who was it? where had she heard it before? There was a familiar sound to the name, although she could not place it, and was still wondering when she entered the room where the visitor awaited her. Brown eyes and ruddy coloring brightened his handsome countenance. His dark hair was plentifully sprinkled with gray, and the silver tint lent an added air of distinction to his personality. "Do you know me?" a pleasant voice inquired, and the gentleman smiled, his brown eyes gleaming at her apparent confusion. "No," she answered, "and yet I feel that I do." Her large dark eyes were fixed on his, and there was a dawning pleasure in their depths.

"I am your father's cousin," he answered, and grasped her quickly outstretched hand.

"Ah, yes; from North Carolina. How glad I am to meet you!" in quick interest. "I have met so few of my father's people; in fact, you are the first in years; and to know more of them has always been my cherished hope."

"And we, too, have hoped to know you," he assured her. The genial nature of the South

was in them both, and soon they grew fast friends.

During his brief visit he urged her to come to the Old North State for recuperation. "In the branches of its tall pines, the breezes whisper of health and joy, and I know it will be good for you." Manning approved the plan, and hastened her preparations for leaving. He chose Asheville as her first stopping place. Mr. and Mrs. LeNoir were to meet her there; and she had promised to make them a visit at their home in Raleigh.

"You cannot fail to enjoy Asheville," Dr. Bryan told her, discussing the proposed trip, "it is one of the most lovely spots I ever saw, and its climate and beauty of scenery will soon make you over again, my dear."

"Going to North Carolina! How strange, how strange!" he afterward mused. "The workings of Providence! If it should be! but even so, it is hardly likely that they two should meet."

CHAPTER XIV

HIGH up the mountain, at Kenilworth Inn, Eleanor and little Joe found a temporary home. From that magnificent location the eye is met on every side by the wooded slopes of the surrounding mountain, green as emerald in the sunlight, but shading into darkness in the shadows, and into shifting opal hues of blue and lilac beneath the obscuring clouds that float round their summits. Far to the West, the mountains lie, their shadowy outlines half hidden by the mists.

Two weeks of undiluted pleasure they spent together, winding down the narrow paths, gathering the strange new flowers scattered profusely over the mountain sides, and searching the woods for ferns that everywhere bordered the rippling streams as they found their musical way from the eternal springs, where from the mountains down through the trees and flowers they flowed to empty themselves into the rushing waters of the river that bathed the mountain's rocky foot.

Each day developed its own new joy, and

little Joe was like a thing demented by his happiness at the discovery of these hitherto unknown, undreamed of pleasures. His clear, white skin took on a browner tint; his large, brown eyes sparkled more brightly, and the clear music of his laughter floated on the warm air; each note a gem in his mother's crown of joy. Between themselves love seemed to find perennial springs of never-failing strength to feed anew their love. The people at the hotel grew familiar with the sight of them wandering off hand in hand, to explore some new nook, where ferns flourished or where daisies nodded their graceful heads on their long, upright stems. Their rooms overflowed with the beautiful burdens with which their arms were filled, returning from these daily tramps.

Two undisturbed and happy weeks were theirs before Mr. and Mrs. LeNoir came. To them Asheville was an old story, but no one could tire of its picturesque beauty or fail to enjoy its bracing health-giving atmosphere.

Mrs. LeNoir was a rather small, slender woman; her head, crowned with an abundance of red-brown hair, was well held upon her slender neck. Her clear, white skin was tinged with a delicate pink in cheeks, and rich scarlet in her curving lips. Her large, gray eyes gleaming brightly with animation, attracted everyone she

met. More than merely pretty, she possessed that rarest of all charms—the subtle fascination by which a friend is made, and afterwards, kept. Between Eleanor and her a quick interest developed, and quite equal to their friendship was that which arose between Mr. LeNoir and little Joe. Without children of his own, and with few among his family, the man's heart went out to the engaging child, who in that way seen oftenest in children and in dogs, responded lavishly to his affection. Augmenting the slight relationship between them, he taught the child to call him "Uncle," and they became good comrades.

Joe, desirous of revealing to his new confederate the wonders of his recent discoveries, led him along the paths and streams, pointing out the springs that bubbled through the rocks, emptying their overflow into the clear waters of the nearby river. "It goes yite down to de wibber," he explained. "Muddy taked off my shoes and tockings so I could wade. Ess us wade now, des you and me," his brown eyes half shut, their smooth lids wrinkled in a quizzical smile of understanding.

Before the coming of Mr. and Mrs. LeNoir, Eleanor and the boy had spent most of their time out of doors, rambling over the hillsides and through the valleys, listening to the calling

of the birds, enjoying the all pervading naturalness of things, desiring little but themselves and the wild beauty round them. In the spirit of genial Southern hospitality, Mr. and Mrs. LeNoir pressed upon Eleanor the acquaintance of their Asheville friends, and through them it was that she first learned of the real South.

"I am so delighted with your friends," Eleanor exclaimed to Mrs. LeNoir. "I never knew such lovely people lived on earth." She half laughed at her superlative words and as if excusing her warmth, continued: "You know I am half Southern, and I now believe it is my greater half. I have grown to love it all so soon."

"I wish we might keep you among us always," Mrs. LeNoir responded.

"You may, if you are not more careful how you display your temptations," Eleanor laughed again, as she uttered the light words, but to herself, she added: "I wish I might never see New York again."

At the end of their two months' stay in Asheville, the LeNoirs returned to their home in Raleigh, and with them, Eleanor and the little child, now grown fast friends, for their promised visit.

Mr. LeNoir had a great fondness for dogs, and in their home there were four occupying important places: Wiggles, Jap and Nick; three

frisky young Scotch terriers, and Shirley, the mother of them all. Jap and Wiggles might lay claim to beauty, but Nick was bow-legged, shaggy and forlorn looking—as ugly as he was good, and as good as he could be.

To Nick, little Joe immediately attached himself, and the child with the dog made a funny couple roaming round the big yard, chasing butterflies by day and lightning bugs at night.

“He not plitty, but he so dood to me,” little Joe explained.

“Top! Jap, don’t shite my daug,” they heard his excited cry, and hurrying to the scene, Mr. LeNoir turned, softly calling to his wife and Eleanor to witness the struggle. Nick and Jap were in the throes of battle; snapping, snarling, biting and teasing each other, while Joe stood by, deep concern upon his face, calling out again and again: “Top, Jap! don’t shite Nick.”

Wiggles heard the sounds of warfare, and came bounding over the lawn to the rescue of her beloved Jap, as if fearing injury for him at the hands of Nick, their joint enemy, and at her appearance, the battle grew more fierce.

Shirley lay upon the steps in comfortable middle-aged lethargy, but lifted her head at the persistent yelping; then rising with a disapproving snarl, her hair bristling with anger at the public misbehavior of her children, she

raced toward them, an angry ball of fur bearing swift punishment for the offenders. Into the midst of them she jumped, distributing her angry snaps and snarls on all sides with impartial justice.

This was too much for Joe, and despairing of Nick's survival of the attacks of the combined forces, he plunged boldly into the *mêlée*, grasped Nick's neck with two protecting arms, while with his sturdy little legs, he wielded swift blows upon the late assailants of his favorite.

"Kit it! Jap—kit it Shaily!—do way, Widdles!" he cried in angry tones. "Don't you shite my daug!" The surprised dogs stood back from the fierce little legs, but Nick was choking in the tightly clasping arms, and struggled wildly to escape. The baby voice grew tender: "Be dood, Nick. I dot you, be dood," till reassured, Nick grew quieter, and holding tight around Nick's shoulders, Joe sank upon the grass beside him, and the boy and his dog thus challenged the world.

The laughter of the watchers did not disconcert him, as he turned to them explaining: "I dot my daug. Dey was shitin' he."

"By George! he's a plucky little chap," Mr. LeNoir cried admiringly, then turned to Joe: "You shall have Nick, Joe, since you have res-

cued him. He is your dog now, to keep, for always."

"An' lib wiv me?" the child asked, his eyes bright and shining.

"Yes, your own to live with you always."

"Oh, doody! doody! doody! Nick's my daug! Nick's my daug!" he cried, jumping wildly up and down, then dashed to Mr. LeNoir and clasped him around the knees. "I lub you, Uncle Abewy, you'se dood to me," he gratefully declared.

The LeNoir house looked upon an immense front lawn, shaded with large trees and beautified by flowers. Raleigh is old and aristocratic, its residents acknowledged the superior birth and breeding of the old families, and even with the late influx of money and modernity, the difference is widely marked as is shown by the contemptuous comparisons of the servants. "Dey's new folks. Ole Mistis is quality." Mrs. Gregory, Mrs. LeNoir's mother, was "Ole Mistis."

The Gregory family homestead was a large Colonial mansion, built in the style of long ago, but unlike many of the old Southern homesteads, which have unhappily gone to ruin, this home was kept up as handsomely as of old. The large lawns were smooth and green; the well-trimmed trees shaded the rustic seats below.

Flowers grew where they had bloomed for more than a hundred years, dropping their seeds to come again in the selfsame spots with each succeeding spring. The furniture was as brightly polished as when first it graced the place when Mrs. Gregory's grandmother, in stiff brocade and rare old lace, swept from her coach, a new-made bride, to enter the home prepared with infinite pains by her handsome young husband, who held open the door, and bade her enter. From that day, the Gregory family had lived there, each oldest son occupying the old home with increasing pride.

The Civil War, that devastated the South of the flower of her manhood, so thinned the ranks of the Gregory family, that after its close but few remained. Mr. Gregory, the oldest of his family, was the only one of four brothers to return from that unhappy struggle, and he came, bearing pistol wounds and sabre thrusts, mementoes of its deadly struggles.

Though blessed with numerous children, but three now remained to them; two daughters, Mrs. LeNoir and Mary, a young girl of sixteen, and one son—Harold—a man of thirty years.

Mary Gregory was a small, slender girl. Her curling, brown hair was nearly black, and her dark, brown eyes were bright with a mischievous light. Her rich brunette skin was

tinted like burnt ivory. She and her brother Hal were constant companions.

"If you are not careful, Brother Hal, you will be too old and feeble to take me out," she said one day, teasing him.

"I think, perhaps, someone might be found to take your old brother's place, in such an extremity," he laughed, pulling out a long, brown curl, that hung behind her ear.

"Oh! Hal, I see you want to desert me. Don't go back on me now about that hateful old school. You've always been my friend," she pleaded, her arms around him, her face pressed close to his.

"Be good another year, little girl, and you may then be free," he promised in a whisper.

"Really, Hal? Mother says two years."

"You be good and we will see."

"Oh, I will, if one hateful year is gone. You are a darling old angel, Big Brother," and she hugged him frantically.

"Ugh! what a little bear you are. You've broken my neck, I declare," rubbing his neck in mock distress.

Mary danced off laughing. "One year gone, one year gone, one year gone," she chanted gaily, dancing around him.

"Why, Mary, are you mad?" a laughing voice inquired, and they turned to find Mrs. Le-

Noir and Eleanor coming up the path toward them. Mrs. Gregory sat in her own special summer-house, her favorite cross-stitch work in her busy hands. Upon the soft path the newcomers made little noise. "Come in, my dears," she invited them.

"It is so lovely out of doors to-day, that I left the house for the bright sunshine. Dear child"—she turned to Eleanor, taking her hand—"this is my boy, Harold; I've told you of him, you know. He made his mother happy when he came home last night."

Harold's eyes met Eleanor's; the loveliest eyes he had ever seen, the loveliest face, the loveliest woman; and from that first look, his admiration quickened.

"My mother has sung your praises, Mrs. Manning, since I arrived last night. I am delighted to meet you."

Eleanor's face was rosy, and filled with laughter when she came up the path with Mrs. LeNoir, but suddenly the rosy tint retreated, and pallor overspread her face.

The man's voice gripped her heart with an iron grasp of tormenting doubt and memory. His gray eyes scanned her face, until she felt that she must die.

"Oh, God! will he never look away," her anguished heart cried, but with a great effort, she

answered him, her heart almost stilled with the dread reality thrust upon it. How the morning passed, she hardly knew, in her fevered excitement, trying to appear at ease.

On the return drive Mrs. Lenoir said to her: "My brother insists that he must have met you previously. He says there is something which tells him that he has known you before."

"Such things are very strange," Eleanor answered, not daring to be silent, though her voice was low and shaken. "But I think they often happen."

"Yes," Mrs. LeNoir proceeded, "it almost leads one to believe in the soul's transmigration, and that we have in other worlds known and been known before we came to this."

Eleanor's eyes were far away and dreamy, and the drive homeward was rather silent.

That night, when her child was sleeping, she sank upon her knees beside her window, gazing into the night. "Why did I come—why did I come here? What shall I do? To face him again, I dare not. I am overtaken by my shame," and her head fell upon the window-seat as she crouched alone in the darkened room.

At the end of the long hours, one thing was plain to Eleanor; that she could not retreat.

Her first impulse had been to leave Raleigh and even the State, immediately, but a second thought had taught her the inadvisability of such a move. First: the offence to her hostess, who expected her to remain for the promised visit, and then, what would Gregory think? Might not the very act of her flight tend to disclose to him the secret of her identity. "No, no, I must face him, but how? God help me, I am punished indeed." But by the time that light had vanquished darkness, all her plans were made. She would remain in Raleigh as she had promised, but concerning him, she would be so careful to avoid him, that no exchange of friendliness might even be attempted. In her sophistry, she overlooked his part in the program, disregarded, too, the fact that already she had grown to love her ideal of an unknown man, and that when wounded nature cries aloud, reason's voice is hardly heard.

She believed she could conceal her identity. "I will go away as soon as an opportunity presents itself," she assured herself. Preparing to meet Gregory, as she knew she must, preparing also to shun his too close society, he grew to occupy her mind almost to the exclusion of other things. Even the child, about whom her tenderest love had wrapped itself, became no longer her only object. To evade him, to avoid him, and yet to do it without exciting his sus-

pitions, she found it hard, for within a few days of their first meeting, Gregory plainly showed that his interest in her was intensely aroused, by the way his eyes followed her movements, in his manner of anticipating her every want, and more than all, by the light that filled his blue-gray eyes, and turned them into liquid sources of tenderness. He knew that she was trying to avoid him, and the reason sorely puzzled him. When the realization found its way to his impetuous heart, he grimly determined: "I'll find out why."

"She shuns me," he confided to his lone cigar, after leaving the LeNoir home. "Wonder what it is about me she dislikes so much. I'd like to know so I could change it." As he laughed, the laughter held a note not all of pleasure.

In her room, Eleanor was telling her reflection: "I have made him hate me. I saw it in his eyes when I refused to talk to him. Yes, he hates me, hates me and despises me." Her eyes were feverish, and her hands clasped and unclasped themselves against her breast. "But how he would despise and scorn me if he knew the truth. Then he would spurn me from his sight; expose me to his people; turn me from his sister's house. I know the Southern idea—that man may fall away where'er he choose, but one false step on woman's part, and she is

past redemption. Oh! that I should have met him, and the sight of him should now so torture me! The look that comes into his eyes is not always that of hatred, and when it comes, my soul trembles before it, like frail grasses in the breeze. Yes, and like the grass, I bow to earth under the compellment of his strength. But I must not succumb; I must struggle on against him, however hard the way may be, to prevent his finding out."

In the early morning sunshine, Eleanor, standing at her open window, after an unquiet night, was greeted by a sight that thrilled her heart with anguished dread; like an icy band it closed around it. Gregory, advancing toward the house, met the child playing with the dogs, and stopped to talk with him, his tall, straight form bent toward the laughing child, as he listened to his words. Suddenly he lifted his head and laughed aloud, and mingling with his mellow tones, the childish voice chimed in. The watching woman heard, and at the sound her heart contracted with quick pain; then through her like a wave, surged upward from her beating heart a sudden ecstasy of joy. Through all her fear and dread, this joy found its way, and stronger than all else, drove fear and dread before it. Sweet and subtle, like the incense to the ancient gods, it spread throughout her soul;

for nature had awakened, and demanded her own.

A few mornings later, the little figure in the scarlet coat and cap, made an attractive spot of color flying over the lawn, followed and surrounded by the playful little dogs. Down the broad street a torn-down wagon plodded its slow way, while perched upon the insecure seat were two brown-faced pickaninnies whistling like bright-eyed birds.

Joe stopped his play to listen to the boys, but Nick and Jap were unappreciative of the melody and dashed toward the gate in yelping wrath, threatening the intruders on their peace, with voice and angry attitude. The music stopped with the wagon, while from the seat the pickaninnies laughed. "Dems bad dawgs, sho's yo' bawn," one cried in glee. "Look at de little un—he's mos' es big es mah fis," and again the happy laugh rang out.

"See the long-legged un, ain' he a sight? Sic 'im, Tige," the other yelled at Nick, who barked and yelped more fiercely in return.

Joe was quick to recognize the insult, and he, too, swelled with anger. "Top dat, nigger—do 'way," he cried imperiously. The brown faces convulsed anew; the red mouths stretched wide in laughter at the sight of the funny little figure of rage, standing within the gate.

"Ain' 'e mad?" one cried. "He's a' goin' to eat us."

"I reckon we better git," his companion answered, pretending fear.

Just then Mr. LeNoir appeared at the door to investigate the cause of the disturbance, but at the ludicrous sight that met him, he hid again to watch its termination.

Down the street the wagon rolled, each wheel at a different angle, each of them emitting its separate creak of protest at the necessity to move. The old horse shambled lazily along, undisturbed by its driver's sharp "gittap" or the familiar snap of the leather whip.

Looking back, the boys cried: "Sic' 'im, Tige," and all the dogs joined in: "Bow-wow-wow—wow-wow!"

At a loss to further vent his unappeased wrath, Joe stood a moment gazing at the retreating wagon; then as if struck by a sudden happy thought, he, too, joined in the chorus: "Bow-wow-bow-wow-wow!" his little body bending back and forth, his whole frame convulsed by the fierceness of his assault.

"Hello! Joe, have you turned dog?" a voice inquired, as Harold Gregory, convulsed with laughter at the funny sight, came around the corner. "Tell me about it," he insisted, and Joe related the tale.

“And so you barked at them with Nick, did you?” Mrs. LeNoir had joined them, and Gregory winked at her, as he asked the question.

“Ma’am—I did,” the child replied.

During the days that followed, Eleanor found that she could not, without positive rudeness, avoid Gregory’s society, for he was determined that she should not evade him. With a lover’s eyes, he looked in hers, and saw therein what she believed she hid; uneasiness and nervous dread of his scrutiny. Although unable to solve the reason for its being, the way in which she vainly sought to shield herself hurt him, until one day, in an unguarded moment, the mask slipped aside, and beneath its shadow Gregory saw that which set his pulses bounding, his heart beating with unexpected joy. The look was hidden again almost as soon as seen, for into his face had leaped an answering light to warn her of her danger. But Gregory did not forget the glimpse he caught, and the remembrance of it robbed her coldness of its chill.

In the meantime, since progress with the mother was so difficult to make, Gregory devoted his efforts to little Joe. Often he asked himself if it was alone because the child was hers, that his interest in him grew so intense. At first, obedient to his mother’s stern com-

mand, Joe held away from too close contact with him. "No, muddy tole me not to tay wiv you," he lisped.

"Why did she say that, Joe, I wonder," the man asked, half angry, half amused at the candor of the child.

"You make my muddy ky," he explained.

"How do you know? Tell me, little man," and his voice was very eager.

"You talked to her de udder day, an' hurted her, cause she came in an' kied; I kissed de ky away, I did."

"And did she say I hurt her, Joe?" he asked again, in sober tones.

"An' she hugged me up so tight, and telled me to lub her hard, cause I was all she got to lub her."

"I'm very sure you needn't be the only one," Gregory remarked beneath his breath, but Joe only understood that the man was very kind to him, and that from this day he found a new and most indulgent friend.

A week later Eleanor was seated in Mrs. LeNoir's honeysuckle arbor with Joe beside her. The vines were putting forth fresh sprigs of tender green, for spring was near at hand, and ere many weeks had passed would have emptied her storehouse of fragrance and beautified the world with color and sweetness.

Their visit was drawing to a close, and with its termination, a tender dreamy look had come to Eleanor's eyes. She was not aware of its presence, and did not know that it revealed to Gregory the secret which she strove to hide. Afraid of loving him, she was gradually growing to realize the fact of her love. "I must not think of him," she repeated again and again. But love refuses warning, and pursues its heedless way regarding neither friend nor foe.

"Here he comes! here he comes!" Joe cried, and dashed toward an advancing figure. He little knew that in his mother's heart the same words sang; the same sight sent a thrill of indescribable joy in a mad race in her brain. The bright sun touched his dark hair inclined to curl, as he lifted his hat in greeting. Eleanor attempted an unconstrained smile, but one look in his face taught her that she could no longer escape him. Half frightened, she arose as if to attempt escape; her color came and went rapidly; her heart was palpitating fiercely; and she stood, one hand pressed against it as if to still its tumultuous beating. Still his eyes searched her face and would not release her own; held her spell-bound beneath his gaze, where adoring love stood plainly forth. He caught her hands. "There is no other way for me," he

told her, "but to go." She bent her head, but did not answer. "I must not stay—my love would bring disaster."

"That could not be," she whispered, her eyes alight, forgetting all but love.

His eyes were reading hers, and the secrets there laid bare, set his heart to faster beating. Each read in other eyes, the story that has no need of words, and despite the coming parting, neither would forbear to read. But the silence ended. "Just once—let me say it." His hands held hers against his breast; his eyes still pleaded, although his lips dared not express his longing.

"You are—I know—not mine, but—I love you—love you—love you. Let me love you enough to go."

The tears that filled her eyes were half of pain, but the other half of joy, at his acknowledged love, and its answer in her heart.

"A telegram for Mrs. Manning, ma'am," announced Mrs. LeNoir's servant. When she saw Eleanor's face, Mrs. LeNoir asked quickly: "Oh! what is it?"

"I must go to-day," Eleanor answered, handing her the message:

"Meet me at Asheville, Thursday. Must see the boy at once.

"WILLIAM MANNING."

CHAPTER XV

ELEANOR found Manning awaiting her coming, apparently possessed by the demons of unrest and discontent.

At one time, he discovered cause for complaint in her every action, then suddenly a change would come, and in his embrace she found greater punishment than his displeasure held.

"I have given up all other women," he assured her, again and again: "I care nothing for them now, not one."

If, before she reached North Carolina, her marriage had grown irksome, it now became so deep, so vile an ignominious distress, that each look, each touch and each word of passing tenderness from him renewed her torture.

"If he beat me instead," she moaned to herself in the solitude; "if I could only choose again the insults and the bare-faced neglect which he gave me before my baby came. But this, this horrible loving on his part, while all the time my soul cries for another—oh! my God, let it end *some way!*"

But if Manning saw, he did not suffer from it. He was quite well content since she had given him a child. "She was never very loving," he told himself, when her haste to quit his arms could not be hid. "When will you learn to love me, too?" he asked her, catching her unaware, rapt in the child, murmuring her devotion in his ear. "He makes me love you more," he explained in painful detail; and she must listen with her mother love crushed down and beaten back into her heart by the flood of hate for him fast rising. "If I could only understand you," he argued. "Your face is almost guilty when I come upon you with the boy. You are always loving him, and why not me? I cannot understand you."

"Would to God you did," she raged, when he left her, unappeased. "Oh! that I might make you understand with hands to rend and tear, with feet to crush and lips to tell of loathing. If I might only dare express my hate of you—you beast. You, who made of me what he would call me, if he knew it all. You sunk me in this hell of anguish where I can look above and see and long for my lost mate, and the love I might have had. Oh, my God!—or if I dare not say *my* God, who feel so lost, so sunk in infamy and the sins of my hated bondage, then to the God of pity, God of mercy, let

me pray, to end it. Grant me my liberty, O God! or let me die.”

Four weeks she spent with Manning—spent them, since she must, in the way the law provides, till every heartbeat of soul grew mutinous and mad.

“I must leave you to-morrow,” he told her one morning, after his mail had come, “but not for long. I will return as soon as possible.”

But even in his absence, her self-torture remained, for as long as there is life, there is conscience to remember; there is a heart to long for happiness, and to sicken when it is denied, and even with her child, a change had come. He was no longer now an undiluted joy, for in their intercourse, a strange new note had crept, and she had grown to see in all his baby ways a likeness, faint, intangible, and perhaps, imaginary, to him who filled her thoughts. The idea tantalized and pursued her to a state that bordered upon sickness. Her face grew white and drawn, and round her large, dark eyes misery cast its shadows.

“Muddy, don’t ky. I lub you.” The baby voice was sweet with the wish to comfort her, and the child reached up to her loving arms, in whose shelter her trembling lips and brimming eyes found refuge. Then Gregory came. The spring air was cool towards evening and the

fire in the grate cast a fitful light on the two before it locked in each other's arms. Thus he found them. The little head grown heavy, the white lids drooped over the dream-filled eyes, Joe lay sleeping in his mother's arms. Against the crimson velvet of the high-backed chair, her head rested. Another pair of white lids had drooped and hid her tired eyes. She slept and did not hear the opening door, nor the voice of the maid announcing his name. The door closed softly and the man advanced toward the quiet figures half hidden in the big-armed chair where the baby lay, clasped in his mother's arms, a sweet smile on his face. Upon the mother's face no lingering trace of smiling could be seen. Instead, her face showed signs of suffering that pinched it into unaccustomed sharpness. The dark circles beneath the eyes were brought out cruelly, in the flickering glow of the fire. Gazing at them, the watcher caught his breath sharply. At the slight sound, Eleanor opened her eyes towards him. She did not move, but gazed at him as if still asleep and dreaming. "You?" Her lips framed the word, but her voice was hardly audible.

"Yes, dear, I," he answered softly, holding out his hands.

The sound of his voice broke the sleepy spell, and the quick blood flooded her face with its

rosy glow. She tried to rise, still holding the sleeping child. "I thought I dreamed," she murmured in confusion.

"No, I have come," he told her. "I could not, would not stay away, since I have heard it all. I did not try to take you from him before I knew your martyrdom; but now that I do know him as he is, you shall no longer stay. Mine, in our hearts, you are and mine before the world you soon shall be." He took from her the sleeping child and laid him down, still sleeping; unconscious witness of their love.

Eleanor hardly stirred. Surprise and weakening joy at the sight of him half stunned her. Her eyes upon his held him.

"Speak, dear one, speak," he urged, "tell me that you are glad."

She did not answer, and in her eyes, he read an awful fear.

"Sweetheart!" he cried. Slowly she shook her head. "No! no!" she whispered brokenly, and at the words, a tear found freedom, and marked a path down her white face. With sudden force he caught her hands. "Eleanor, look at me! Look up, and say you love me. That is all I want to know. Say it. If you love me, tell me. Do you love me?" Still no answer but a soft low moan. "Then say you do not love me?" His voice grew harder, and he

tightened his hold with cruel force. "Say it; if that is true, say it."

"I cannot," she whispered with a sob, respondent to his masterful command.

It was she who spoke at last. "Are you sure?"

"Sure?" he replied, "Yes, at last, thank God, I am sure." His voice was reverent, and almost grave.

"No matter what shall come?" she asked softly. In a louder tone, as if to challenge all the world, he answered her: "Yes, no matter what comes,—no matter who says 'Nay'—beyond all obstacles, above and over all, since your heart answers you are mine."

A long, long minute passed ere either spoke again. Folded in close embrace, he held her; heart on heart, and lip on lip, revealing all love's secrets.

The next day driving along the shady road where the tall trees met above them, and all was silent in the deep forest shade, a sudden impulse seized him. "Eleanor," he began, "there is a thing I want to tell you, and yet I hardly can. I know you love me; you prove it by your eyes, your lips; all your sweet self repeats the glorious truth. I believe you have given me the first and only love of your life. Is it true, Eleanor?" and he awaited the answer which he

knew would come. On her face a tender smile appeared.

“Yes, dear, but for you and little Joe, I would not have known what love means.”

“’Tis this that makes my story hard for me.”

In sudden fright she turned to him. “You do not mean, oh, Hal, you do not mean that you have not given me all your heart; you love me Hal—you love me—say you do!”

“Yes, I do dear one; I love you better than the world, and yet, I can’t explain it well, I know,—there was a time when you had a rival.”

“Oh, Hal, you cannot mean it! It can’t be true!” and apprehension shook her voice.

“Not now, sweetheart, not now. You may be sure that in my heart there lies no thought, that is not yours. No image but your own. ’Tis a strange story, and hard to understand, but somehow I want to tell you now. Once on a time I met a woman, her name and station does not matter. She may be beautiful or good, I do not know. I did not know her long. But this is where my story lies. I met her under strange circumstances; when she was sunk in great despair. Her anguish broke my heart; has tortured me for years. I lost her as completely as though she had never been, and

though I searched, I searched in vain; I could not find her. None other took her place, for her soul had called to mine in that hour of trial, and mine had answered."

His voice stopped. Eleanor said not a word, but her eyes were fixed upon him as though she could not take them away. He felt her gaze, and looked past her between the trees.

"I was never satisfied to relinquish the hope of meeting her," he at last went on, "until you came. When I saw you, your coming cast behind me every other thought, for I knew you for mine, at once. Now I have ceased to think of her, or if I do, it is of a longing satisfied, for though it may seem strange, dear, try to understand, I feel besides your own place in my heart, you have also taken and filled hers."

While he waited for her reply, Eleanor dared not trust herself to speak.

"Well, dear?" he questioned, since he must hear her voice.

"It is well, dear," she whispered when she could, "for all is well between us."

"I knew your noble heart, dear one," he congratulated himself. In the relief of having told his secret, he saw nothing but love in Eleanor's eyes as he kissed her. "I am so glad I've said it, dear. Of course, it was nothing at all at the time—not like real love anyway, but I

simply could not have a secret of any kind between us."

"A secret between us," her heart repeated. "No! No! I will not think of it. I will be happy now."

For those few days together, Eleanor shut her ears to any argument, but those of love. With every hour, her love for Gregory seemed to deepen, and his for her was boundless.

When conscience tried to whisper, she crushed it back.—"No, no, not now," rejecting all its pleas. But no human force, however strong we deem it, can cope with the divine spark which dwells within us all. For a time we may believe that we can silence the still small voice reminding us of our misdeeds, but in the end it triumphs over all our arguments, and brings us shamed and overtaken to the realization that we have tried to pit our feeble human strength against the powerful forces of Almighty God.

And it was thus with Eleanor. Through the days they spent together she thrust behind her with a fevered strength all her other thoughts, and clung to Gregory. She did not know that in her eyes he read the fears that lay but half asleep, within her heart.

"Just a little while," she pleaded, when he begged her to hasten the suit for divorce. "Just a few days for happiness before I must

go into all these awful things again." And though he too feared that which cast the shadows, mirrored in her eyes, he could not thrust her out of their new paradise, but consenting to delay, held her close, and told her again and again the story to which she so eagerly gave ear—the old, old, but ever new story of man's love for woman, and man's desire for woman's love. While her lips told him, her eyes repeated the fulfillment of his love, and the love which stirred her heart responsive to his wooing, until the fears perforce must hide again, biding their time.

"Have I forgotten you, my baby?" she asked herself one night, as she sat watching the sleeping child. "Do I love you less because I now can love him too? Ah! no it is not so! It shall not be that I may not have both. Baby, baby, drive away the fears. Do not let me even think them. You are mine forever, darling, and I dare to hope that he shall be."

July came, and the days over-ran with sunshine. Somewhere, July may not be the month of universal choice, but in Asheville each season as it comes, displays such lavish treasures of beauty and delight, that the onlooker cries again: "This is the one for me."

The early mornings found them filled with rapture at the rare delight of Nature's loveliness when she wakes from her sweet refreshing

sleep, and gathers together her colors, her odors and her songs, like a siren planning to enchant thereby the hearts of men.

Through the fresh morning, each moment was a pearl, which strung themselves into the hours to circle round the day; each hour enfolded some new joy for love helped them thereat, and whispered his suggestions.

The full moontime expressed the fullness, and the passion of their love. Even the evenings did not chill, but with a tender sweet caress lulled them to sleep with love and joy enthroned triumphant in their hearts.

For more than a week, they spent the time like this, but then a summons came for Gregory. "I ought to go," he said. He looked at Eleanor with eyes that seemed to say he could not.

"But you must, Harold dear," she answered him in quick decision for his interests, even if against love's sake.

"It can't be long, and I'll wait for you here, thinking of you all the time."

"And loving me?" he asked, not from doubt, but for the sake of hearing once again the sweet assurance.

"Yes, loving, loving; every minute, every hour, with all my soul, with every fibre, every beat of my heart which is yours," she answered, pressed close against him. Thus again they each forgot the world.

CHAPTER XVI

IN the days that followed Gregory's departure, Eleanor roamed with little Joe over the beautiful grounds, played hide and seek in the maze, rowed on the lake, swung under the trees, or lay beneath them, listening to the stories told by the winds and repeated by the rustling leaves. Many fairy stories were invented during that time, trying to forget her loneliness in the pleasure of the child.

"Do you love me sweetheart?" she asked, her heart hungering for the assent which she knew would come.

"Ma'am," with quick assurance, then with a flood of tenderness, he flung his little body on her as she lay upon the soft green grass. "I love my muddy lee bes', lee bes in lee worl," he declared, holding her tight.

They clung close for a sweet moment; mother and child in that embrace, the sweetest known to life.

There may be moments when man's love and woman's seem so full and so complete that nothing could exceed its rapture, but this is not to be compared to the ecstasy that floods a mother's heart when her child clings to her with

love and loving words. Each tone of the baby's voice is to her a jewel of the purest ray, each smile a priceless treasure, each touch a rapture unparalleled.

Sometimes these mothers do not seem to know it till the baby's form is still and cold, the sweet voice forever silenced, the little hands stretch out no more, and the smile is no longer seen. But there are others whose eyes open to these joys when first their arms enfold the longed-for child. To such as these, fate is indeed a friend when she has given them not only love in this sweet guise, but added to their lot a passion and enduring love for the father of their children.

One afternoon when driving, Joe's quick ears heard a burst of music, and he turned his head demanding: "Muddy, hear lee mugit? I want to go," till they drove toward the sound.

As they neared the open square around which Asheville is built, the source of the music was discovered in a Salvation Army band upon one corner.

Several women and three men composed the band. The faces of the women bore proof of long hours of work, and much exposure; but amongst them all, there was not one whose countenance did not reveal a quiet joy.

Upon one homely face there shone such a

light of joy, that it attracted Eleanor's special attention. Never in her life before, had she come so nearly into touch with the Salvation Army, and before this time she had, as have many others who do not seriously consider them, given them a tardy tolerance very nearly like contempt.

Joe, too, was interested. He stood upon the seat, his big eyes fixed upon them as they sang, to the unmusical accompaniment of their battered instruments. Their songs were in no degree artistic, and there was among them all, not a single voice to strike a sensitive ear pleasantly; however, there was something that could not be overlooked, which rose from the small band of hard-worked, common place street musicians, and said to those with ears to hear, "I come from God."

Joe's observant eyes recognized the presence there of something he had not often seen, and he turned to the older intelligence beside him, demanding: "Muddy, shut makes lee man be so glad?" He pointed to the one whose face shone brightest, the one about whom Eleanor too was wondering.

"What makes the man glad, darling," she repeated after him, while all at once she asked herself—"Do I know? Can I understand his joy?"

Her soul responded to the query, and for the first time in her life the answer that it made struck at the doors of her heart a blow that resounded through her being.

"I do not know," she said, and her voice sounded dully to her ear, "I do not know."

Near their carriage, stood a laughing group of girls and boys, and one, more forward than the rest, laughed loudly as she said: "I've always said that the Salvation Army women must be consecrated to be willing to wear those awful hats."

At the laughter following her remark, one of the women in the band turned toward them, and Eleanor looked well into her face. Although she had heard the careless words, her face showed no resentment. Instead, her soft gray eyes seemed filled with pity for the one who spoke, and for the others who had laughed.

She had risen above vanity, and with a saint's forbearance spoke to the girl.

"Thank you, and God bless you, my Sister," she said; and the girl made her way through the crowd, shamed by the look upon the woman's face.

Again Eleanor's soul whispered: "I do not know of such as this."

Those who possess riches, generally answer the voices in the way that Eleanor tried. She

gave her money; and the sweet half sad voice said to her as she extended it: "God bless you, my Sister."

At the repeated words and the familiarity of the phrasing, her aristocratic inner self shrunk back. "Sister!" it whispered, "Sister! how insolent!"

At her order, the carriage moved on, but the hours could not dispel the impression the singers on the street had made. Over and over she saw the strange light that irradiated the homely face of the man, and again and again she heard the words—"God bless you. my Sister."

Surely there was no insult intended, for the soft voice was like a benediction. "Sister! What did it mean? Nothing but the stock phrase of an ignorant sect; religious fanatics roaming the streets making a public exhibition of themselves," she repeated, all this and more, wooing the sleep that would not come to her. "Sister! and the light on the man's face!" She was still thinking of it when at last sleep came.

How often has it been that we have waked from sleep at once deciding to arise? The day held something of too much import for us to waste the early hours remaining in our beds. Sleep was gone, chased far away by a strange

presentiment that cannot be explained, and ever defies description. We may not tell of it, but we all know it, when it comes. It sets our hearts to beating to a faster time, and sends our blood racing in our veins, lends to our eyes a new brightness; making ready for what is on its way.

That day, this was all true with Eleanor. She woke early, though it was late when she had gone to sleep. As soon as her eyes opened, she knew she could not sleep again. The very air seemed laden with a secret meant for her intelligence, but finding a barrier could not make its way within. "What is it?" she asked herself, but her only answer was the memory of a street musician's homely face, filled with a strange light that she could not understand, and the voice of one of his comrades declaring her "my Sister."

"How foolish!" she cried impatiently, "I am positively silly in my childish nervousness," but despite all her efforts, the memories clung.

To break into her persistent thoughts, she decided to make a morning call. Once outside, the motion of the carriage, and the brisk breeze seemed to waken her to other things.

When she reached her destination, she felt that the drive had done her good. Her friend met her, dressed for the street, and Eleanor ex-

claimed: "Oh! what will you think of me? I had actually forgotten it was Sunday."

Mrs. Clayton laughed, and would not hear a word of all she said. "No, no," she cried, "you came the very day you should, for now you can meet the Bishop."

"The Bishop! What Bishop?" Eleanor exclaimed.

"Why! don't you know? Do you never read the papers?" Her friend laughed at her mystified face.

"I read the papers, but I haven't read anything about a Bishop," Eleanor answered.

"Well, now you are going with me to hear him. He is to dine with me to-night, and I will only be the happier if you will consent to join us."

"Oh, no, I couldn't do that, thank you," Eleanor replied. "But tell me, is this the Texas Bishop about whom the Raleigh papers have printed such eulogies lately? You surprised me so, that, at first, I did not think of him."

"Yes, it is he, and if you do not wish to lose a rare treat you will come with me."

Eleanor knew not why, for she very seldom went to church, but she was persuaded to go. The church was filled with a softly chastened light, falling through the window in shafts of vari-colored hues. The choir had not come in,

but already there was present that spirit of reverence which never fails to affect us.

When Mrs. Clayton sank to her knees before she took her seat, Eleanor wondered if she really prayed, or if she only seemed to pray because it is the habit of the Episcopalians to kneel when a church is entered.

Soon the organ notes were heard; at first soft and sweet and tender. The music seemed to describe a mighty love. Its early accents were but whispers, telling of the depths beyond.

Then came the louder notes, richer, stronger and fuller, as if the love behind the music could no longer express itself in whispers, but must pour forth its strength in greater volume.

With the music came the choir. The triumphant processional came from their throats as if laden with the full forces of human souls.

The rector of the church followed the choir, his clear-cut, almost boyish face was grave but tender, as if it had been glorified and blessed by the ministry to which he had been called. After him, in stately dignity, walked the Bishop.

Eleanor could not forbear a long look at him, as he passed near her, and as she looked, an inward recognition of his magnetic personality possessed her. Tall and impressive of carriage, his splendid head, with its fringe of sil-

very hair; his scholarly face where mingled dignity and kindliness, seemed to tell the charm of the man, and added to this was the touch of saintliness given by his lifetime's work for humanity.

The full lace ruffles fell over his hands crossed together as he walked toward that altar on which he laid his talents; dedicated and consecrated his life's abilities to the service of his Master. Behind him, fell the rich folds of his black satin gown, which opened on his breast displaying the sheer whiteness underneath. The stole fell on either side, bordering the black gown's opening, and against the white, the colors of its rich embroidery were seen. From his shoulders hung his scarlet Oxford cape, the brightest spot in all that sober-hued procession.

When the opening hymn was finished, the Bishop's voice rang out; "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him." No one ever heard that great voice unless it thrilled him. Even its tones are eloquent, and when such tones are joined to noble thoughts grandly presented, then indeed you feel the spell it casts around you.

If some divines save themselves, their voices and their strength, solely for their sermons, this one did not. Throughout the impressive service, his full, rich, sonorous tones pervaded the

place; filled it with music, sung through the air with a triumphant note, or sunk to pleadings in the fervent prayers. Every gesture, every pose was grace, though all unconscious of it. On his knees, his figure as well as his voice seemed pleading at God's throne for mercy and forgiveness for the souls he led; the sheep within his fold.

No quick mumbling of unintelligible words from him. Every word, every syllable was as clear as a drop of dew, and like the dew, seemed meant to embellish into greater beauty the flowers of his speech.

Eleanor felt as if some overweening force had come down from another land, and grasping her trembling heart bade it awake and receive that greatest gift, the realization of the immortality of human souls.

Throughout the service she felt this power, but the first impression of that wonderful voice never left her. Through the humble confession of human unworthiness, she heard its clear tones, over the hum of the congregation's mingled voices. It stirred her slumbering conscience, "Almighty and most merciful Father; We have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against Thy holy laws. We have

left undone those things which we ought to have done; and there is no health in us.”

In the unhappy past, sorrow, suffering and bitterness had filled her heart and mind, and left no room for the tender sentiments of Christianity to take firm root and if perchance one found its way into the darkness of her saddened heart, a ministering angel to her soul, the straying beam of light was soon extinguished by the demons of the nether world, resentment, hate and bitterness worse than death, because it will not die.

Even her idolatrous love for her child had not been unmixed with taint. There is but one thing that ever can remove from human hearts the stings of conscience. This is God's love, and God's forgiveness. Only by His expiation, can we hope to have our dire misdeeds washed out.

But Eleanor had not this comfort. She had grown to scoff at the reputed religion which prays on Sunday, sinning doubly all the week.

Even in the tenderness of mother love, she could never forget the desperation preceding the coming of her child, and gazing into his eyes, she often mused: “To have this joy, I had to sink”—but as often as it came she fought back the dreadful thought, afraid of the final words.

All this and more came back to her, on her knees listening to that voice, and as she heard, her soul made its first yearning cry for higher things in its response to the congregation's acknowledgment of sinfulness. Through all the service, all the prayers, the words seemed meant for her. "How blind, how blind, I have been!" she murmured, "and oh my God, how sinful!"

Then came that story which means everything to the world. The story of Christ's love, His life, His suffering and His death. She had known it always as all civilization knows it. She believed the story? Yes, of course, she knew the truth, but not before had the realization come that it meant very much to her. Now, all at once, she knew. That immortal part of humanity stirred and whispered condemnation of her sin. It told her, too, the story of her weakness; it made her know that only by God's far reaching grace could she hope to be saved from the pit her sins had dug.

She could no longer silence that insistent voice. It shook her soul with a power she hitherto had never known. It told her that she need not hope to silence it, or again to thrust it back into oblivion, refusing to hear its cries. No, no, not now! She knew herself, and as she knew, she shuddered from the knowledge that

had come. "Condemned! Lost! By my own acts. Lost!" conscience cried, bewailing all its sins and sinfulness.

The knowledge of unworthiness possessed her soul. She felt that she had put herself beyond the pale. "I have," she cried, "only myself to blame. I have turned my back on God! I have refused to hear Him, when I knew full well what He would say; and now will He hear me? Can I expect Him to listen to me when I refused to think of Him? Oh, my blindness! And now, perhaps, I am too late. Perhaps I have let slip the time when I might have claimed His grace. Have I? Have I?"

Her soul had truly wakened, and its sore distress brought to her face that look, which, once seen, is not soon forgotten.

And indeed, there is no tragedy greater than that which comes when for the first time we see and understand our own unworthiness. That first discerning look into the inky chasms we have called our hearts, when instead of the love and light we thought therein, we find the darkness peopled with the leering visages of sin and death.

The Bishop's sermon was such as few can preach. As he began to speak, everyone within the portals of the church left his own thoughts to hearken to the beauties of those which he expressed for them.

He did not tell of God as dealing vengeance with a mighty arm. He did not speak of an unending hell, where flames unceasingly consume the sufferers who have sinned too many times. He did not threaten of the wrath of God against a sinful world. He told of God omnipotent, forgiving all, and in the end, extending mercy with a gentle hand to those who beg Him for it. He told of pity for the sufferings of our hearts. He offered surcease for our sorrows; he promised healing for our pains.

He said no mother's love was half so soft as that which filled the gentle breast of Him who gave His life that we might live forever; who bent with loving touch, and blessed the little children in His path. He told them of the erring woman brought to Him for punishment, and how He lifted her and dried her sorrowing tears with gentle, pitying words.

He said we must not spend our lives in sad repinings, even if the backward path were strewn with sins as black as night. "The future is your own," he said, "to make it what you will"; begged them to take it as a gift that day, fresh from the hands of God.

"Do not," he cried, "think to undo the past. 'Tis God's will that this cannot be. Let it lie, just as it is. God will attend to that. The future is for you to fill with righteous deeds; with deeds of love, deeds of kindness, deeds of

mercy and of charity. If you do this, 'tis all that you can do. Lay these gifts at your Master's feet, and He will bend a smiling face, and greet you when you come."

No one who heard him could have gone away without the feeling in his heart, that he had listened to a message sent from God, and that he who bore it was inspired by Him, to tell them of God's mercy and God's love.

Eleanor's heart had bled before, but with the sweet assurance of his words, the anguish lifted just a little way, and hope appeared—a tender, timid ray of hope for mercy undeserved. Yet, timid as it was, it lived and grew and blossomed and would not be thrust aside.

At every doubt assailing it, she heard the Bishop's voice again declare a way whereby her hopes might live, and when he raised his hands above them in a final benediction, she knew that never in the world would she be again content until she had that wondrous peace of which he said: "The peace of God which passeth all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you and remain with you always."

She went home, but could not rest, for she had

not that peace for which her heart was longing. To communion with God she could not gain admittance. "Outside the pale!" she cried again, "but I want to be—oh, God, I want to come within!"

The hours of the day were very long. Over and over temptation came, whispering: "Put it away. You are happy; put away the thought." But Satan's wiles cannot prevail against the might of God; neither can he draw back from Him a human soul that clings and prays and wishes to be saved, for after all, it is God's hand upholding us. Our feeble strength would soon succumb, our grasp on that great Rock of Ages would weaken till we fell again into the darkness, whence we came, but God lends to our feeble efforts His own mighty power, and with it we can conquer all.

"We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord." She heard again the Bishop's voice, as in memory his earnest tones came to her, and she fancied she could hear him praying: "Son of God, we beseech Thee to hear us. Oh, Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world; grant us Thy peace. Oh! Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world; have mercy upon us," and to this her burdened soul responded: "Have mercy, Lord, have mercy."

She knew so little of God. No Christian in-

fluence had surrounded her youth, and she had thought that she could live without Him. But now she knew it was not so. Her boasted strength was gone. Now, all for which she dared to hope was mercy and forgiveness, and an opportunity to prove her late repentance. Though God offers us this chance, we do not always grasp it when it comes. But this was not so with Eleanor. "I wish I might see him," she mused, until the impulse was too strong to resist it longer.

She wrote a note to the Bishop at her friend's house, asking: "Can you spare a little while to a soul in deep distress? If it is not too much to ask of you, my carriage will await you." And as soon as he read the words, the Bishop came.

She was waiting for him, in a fever of unrest, for fear he might refuse. As he entered the door, she went toward him rapidly. "Oh! sir, I feared you might not come," she said. Her face showed her distress, and to his experienced eyes, it told her story—the story of an anxious soul.

"Not come, my child," he answered, and when she heard his gentle voice, her heart leaped in her breast with renewed hope. "I trust I never may refuse to come. I am, you know, God's servant."

“Oh, teach me, sir, I beg!” the eager words came fast, “the way to go—until to-day, I did not know that I was lost. But now I see; I feel that I have gone so far astray that God can hardly hear me when I cry. I could not bear the awful fear that I have gone too far to find my way again, and so I dared to send for you. Perhaps He will hear your voice. Tell me, does He refuse forgiveness when you ask Him for it?”

The old man’s face was very tender, and his voice was very sweet as he replied: “You need not fear. God never will refuse to hear. He always grants us mercy and forgiveness.”

“Always?” she questioned further. “Is there no doubt? Are you sure of this?”

“So sure that all of life grows pale beside the splendor of that certainty,” he reassured. “There is no other thing but this, that makes life worth the living. Even to the brightest lives there come some days of pain, and then we feel the glory of God’s love and the bright promise of that great world to come.”

“I do not know your heart, my child,” he spoke again, “but be sure God knows. Between Himself and us, there is nothing hidden; we need not try to hide, and when we love, we do not. Our sorrows and our sins are our Gethsemanes. Through them we all must pass

ere we can share the glories of the resurrection of our souls.”

Every word the Bishop said poured healing on her bleeding heart. His very presence seemed a blessing, while his kind words and face and voice filled her aching heart with hope and reassurance.

When at last he rose to leave and she was trying to express her gratitude, he stopped her, “No, no, my child. Thank God, not me. It is His gift you have to-day.”

“But you came to me a stranger,” she persisted.

“Have you forgotten that Christ came to the world when it had strayed away in sin? I can do so little while the Master can do all. Give all your thanks to Him.” And after he had gone, she stood where he had left her. Her hands still felt his gentle touch, her heart still beat responsive to his farewell blessing. “God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, be with you forevermore.”

When he was there it seemed an easy thing to say: “I will confess my sins to God,” but after he was gone, her greatest trial came.

No longer supported by his gracious kindness, reminding her of the great love and pity and all sufficing loving-kindness of the Heavenly Father, she had now no one to succor her in her hour of agony.

“Must I give him up? Must I slay our love? No! no!” Her heart cried out in agony. “It will kill me to forsake love now. Oh, God, not that! Let me take some other way—not that; at least, not now that love has come; not now.”

But to temptation’s whispers her awakened conscience cried:

“No, no, I dare not even tell him why I go. For my sin, I must forever bear in silent loneliness our secret. If I should tell him, he would claim me all the more, and make retreat impossible, by the knowledge of his parent’s claim, but since he does not know, and if I leave him now, life may some day again smile on him. Yes, for my wickedness, I must resign the man I love, or sink to everlasting death beneath God’s wrath. It is His will that I must expiate my sin by giving up for all this world, the man I love—for how I love him, God alone can know—as mine—my own—and, oh, God!—forgive me, as the father of my child.

It was a long and weary battle before she reached the end; before she conquered her heart that begged protection.

Then she wrote the long despairing letter, telling him of her decision to return to Manning; told him how her soul had awakened and with every breath condemned the course they planned. “I never can or will deny our love, for that is all the world to me,” she wrote, “but

let us place it past our own temptation, and try to live and hope while living here, for God's forgiveness in the end where He may grant to us eternal life together."

Through the long hours she wrote, pouring out to him her aching heart, and telling him all the temptations which her love for him had whispered, and telling him at the end, her soul's replies to all love's pleading.

"To leave him and go back to that—my God!" she cried, upon her knees, late in the night, beside the sleeping child. "It is Gethsemane, and to-morrow, when I take up my cross again, begins my crucifixion. Oh! help me, Christ, I beg. I see the way that I must go, but help me, help me, or I cannot press ahead. Gentle Savior, help me. Teach me to wear my crown of thorns and in the end let me take my little child and follow Thee the best I can."

Joe, wakened at the sobs, and frightened at her tortured face, clung to her, weeping.

"Hush! hush! my child." Her arms around him, they clung together in the silent night. "We have each other. Love me, Joe, for upon earth I have no one but you. Oh! help me, baby, by your love, and, dear Christ, help me to say—'Thy will be done.'"

CHAPTER XVII

WHEN Gregory came the next morning, his step was alert and his face was eager. He hastened to his room and there he found Eleanor's letter. The opening words lined his face, before so full of happiness.

"Leave me now! Oh, God! It shall not be." He would not read it all, in his haste to find her.

At his sudden coming, she rose with a stifled cry of longing, and at love denied full utterance. He caught her close and held her. "You are mine," he told her, "mine by God's almighty law of love. Let no man dare to come between us."

"Wait—listen," she insisted.

"No—even to your own arguments I am deaf. I will not hear them. Not even you shall take my love away from me—not now."

"You must! It is decided by a higher power. Oh, love, my dear, dear love, can you not see, do you not know that we must part?"

"Part! No! I refuse to listen." He held her tight despite her feeble efforts to release herself. "There is not in all the world, one

who comes between us now." His eyes and lips on hers, his arm defying parting as he held her close against him. "After this?" he questioned, when his lips left hers.

"After *all*," she told him.

"You are mad, Eleanor. You do not know what you propose." His voice was growing harder. "You cannot love me and suggest our parting now."

"Cannot love you! God only knows how much I do," she answered through her tears.

"Then let us say no more of this. Love is not lightly put aside, and our love makes us one. I am yours and you are mine, and no man dare gainsay it."

"It is not man, but God." She drew herself away from him a little way, looked in his face, and told him through the tears that choked her—told him so he knew at last her meaning. "It cannot be; I must return. This is my expiation for the sin of loving you."

"It is no sin—such love as ours, for God himself has made it." His voice had sunk to pleading.

"Perhaps some day in God's eternal daytime we may be together, what our hearts now make us, one. But not now, my love, not now, for through this world I must continue bound. Through all my life my only hope outside my

child, is for mercy from a gentle God. That in my unceasing penance He may see some reason for forgiveness, and, oh! my love—my love, my love—for you, all I can do is pray to that God of mercy that you may—forget—” Her fortitude forsook her.

“You shall not go.” He caught her as she tried to pass.

“Oh, God! how hard,” she moaned. “If you would only leave me, Hal, instead. But for me to have to go—to say good-by to you—to you who mean all life to me.” Her tortured eyes told of the struggle plainer than her broken words.

“A few hours, darling,” he begged. “I must see you again,” with all the hopefulness of love.

“No, Hal, it must be now. While yet I can, I will. All that I beg of you is that when your suffering shall cease, you try to think of me, the best you can for love’s dear sake, and try—oh, try—to understand.”

Gregory took both her hands, and compelled her to look at him.

“Listen, darling,” he said. “I am stronger than you and my strength shall prevail. I will compel you to leave this man—and come to me. I will not let you go.”

A sudden terror of his strength possessed

her. He released her hands, and took her into his arms.

"Mine!" he said, low and fervently—"Mine, and mine alone. You are coming to me!"

She felt her will yielding to his. Then light flashed into her soul—the way of escape opened.

"See me once again," she said, "to-morrow night. If, after what I have to tell you, you still say—'Come'—oh, my love, my love, I will obey you!"

Gregory released her in some surprise.

"What could you say to me that would make me desire you less?" he demanded incredulously. "Eleanor, this is no subterfuge? You will see me again?"

"I swear it," she answered. "Leave me now."

He looked at her. But his momentary doubt forsook him when he read her love in the brimming eyes she lifted to his. Pressing a kiss upon her trembling lips, he left her.

For two days Eleanor lived in what seemed to her the nethermost hell. She had vowed to her own soul what she would do, but it seemed impossible.

On the morning of the second day, Manning arrived unexpectedly.

"Listen," he said. "I want to talk to you about my boy."

Eleanor shivered.

"About his education," Manning continued. "I have decided that he must spend some part of every year abroad. Europe can give him certain things, in his youth, not to be acquired later. Therefore, we will sail in two weeks, and to that end you must prepare to leave this place in a day or so."

Eleanor sat very still.

"What have you to say against it?" Manning demanded, impatiently. "He will not always be a child, tied to your apron strings. I take thought for his future—for the figure my son will cut in the world."

Eleanor gathered herself together with an immense effort.

"I will be ready," she said. "But I ask you to grant me one favor."

Manning softened at the gentleness of her tone, and took her in his arms. She shuddered at his touch, but constrained herself to endure it, that she might gain her point.

"Leave me here for one week longer, alone with him," she pleaded. "You say truly—he has to be fitted for a man's part in the world. But give me this last week of his babyhood—here."

"As you will," replied her husband, caressing her ardently. "In fact, I have good rea-

sons for taking the next train. I foolishly left my mail unread till after I had started, and I should be in New York now."

When she was assured of his departure, Eleanor sent for Gregory.

"I postpone what I had to say to you for a few days," she said, when he reached her. "Harold, I want to have a week that you will remember—when—if—we part. I want you to see me daily, to see Joe daily, and never once to speak to me of love. Will you do this?"

"I can refuse you nothing," he answered. "But assure me, Eleanor, that you will not slip away?"

"I will not slip away," she replied. "Come with us to the woods."

She caused a basket of food to be prepared, and taking the child, they set forth. Little Joe was happier than he had ever been before. Gregory played with him to his heart's content. Eleanor, enthroned upon a moss-covered root, watched them, and forced the thought of the future from her mind. From its dark shadow, she snatched this "fearful joy" and lived in the sunshine of the present.

Day after day was spent thus—the unconscious father, the trembling mother, the happy child—and Nature. Sometimes both played with Joe—sometimes, while he slept upon her

knee, Eleanor talked to Gregory upon life's problems, and plunged with him upon the deeps of thought. He, for his part, kept his word, and spoke not of love, content with learning the treasures of her mind, the riches of her intellect. She would not see him after sunset—nor in her house. When he had left her, and her child slept, she knelt—knelt for long hours, gathering strength for love's last ordeal.

The day came when all preparations were completed. Trunks were packed, and waiting at the depôt. She had seen Gregory embrace the boy for the last time. But instead of dismissing him, she said:

“Return at midnight.”

He looked at her with surprise, but without hope—for the aspect of her beauty was unearthly—spiritual.

Eleanor sat beside her sleeping child for a time. Then she dressed her hair with extreme plainness, donned a black gown, and waited for the long hours to pass.

The household was abed, and asleep. No window overlooked the little gate at which she admitted Gregory.

“Not here,” she said, as his eyes fell upon the open door. “Just outside—under this tree. I must be where I can hear his cry—if he should awake.”

The moonlight poured down upon them. She seemed frail and shadowy.

"You can tell me nothing," he said, after a silence, in which they had given themselves up to the rapture of proximity, "nothing—that will make me give you up."

"You propose," she said, her low sweet tones so solemn that he started, "you propose that I leave the man to whom my vows were given—and go to you—living all my life in shame?"

"You are living in shame now," he told her.

"Think of my child," she went on. "If I take him, he loses his honor in the world's eyes. Yet—can you ask me to leave him?"

"For his sake—I might," was Gregory's answer. "For yours, no. For my own, no. I love him as if he were my own."

Eleanor's heart stood still: his words seemed to be an open gate for her avowal—and yet they pierced her heart like a sword.

There was a moment's silence—and then she spoke with calm strength.

"He—is—your own!"

Gregory seized both her hands.

"What?" he cried.

She went on now, with superhuman power.

"I was that woman in the darkened room!"
He dropped her hands. The silence that fell

between them was as some vast and soundless gulf. Across it he looked at her. She could not bear his glance. Her head drooped, and she sobbed. The sound smote him! He recalled—how vividly—hearing that sob before!

“You!” he gasped, at length. For he had no doubt. Instead, he wondered he had never guessed the truth before. Now he understood his love for little Joe.

Eleanor slipped to the ground at his feet.

“You despise me?” she sobbed. “Oh, you can never understand why I did it! I was mad—I was driven mad by cruelty—by injustice. I claimed a child—from life! The eternal mother in me would not be denied! My child would save me from all—would atone. And oh, my love—my love—you gave him to me!”

Gregory bent over her. He lifted her to her feet, he drew her in his arms.

“Do you think,” he said tensely, “that you, who have been already mine—that my child—shall ever leave me now?”

Eleanor lay passive in his arms for a moment. All her strength would be needed later—she dared risk none in a lesser struggle. So she waited, while he poured burning words of love into her ears—waited, until he ceased, marvelling at her stillness, and her silence.

“Speak to me!” he implored, at length.

Eleanor drew away from him and he let her go. She put out her hand, blindly groping for help. It touched a tree and she leaned against it, her head thrown back, the moonlight falling on the ghastly pallor of her face.

“Harold,” she said gently. “Of all things in my life, I care now most for these few days—in which we have learned to know each other so well. Harold, when I tell you that my conscience is sore and smarting, you will understand. When I say to you that I must obey it—and cleanse my soul from sin—you will believe.”

“Eleanor,” he cried, in wild alarm. But she put up her hand, and he stepped back again, awed into silence.

“I had no right—to snatch my son! I had no right—to break my marriage vows! I have sinned, and I must suffer. Yea, I must even pay the uttermost penalty!”

“Have you not paid it?” asked Gregory, despairingly, for now he knew her meaning. “Has not your life been—not purgatorial pains alone, but even fires of hell?”

She shook her head.

“Not cleansing fires, my beloved. Not accepted penance. My agony has been involuntary—there has been no merit in it whatso-

ever. But now, I bend beneath the scourge, I set the crown of thorns upon my head, I clasp my cross to my breast."

Gregory uttered a groan. He knew that against this tide of pure and passionate repentance he was powerless to contend. She went on, her low sweet tones gathering a triumphant strength.

"My penance is—to keep my marriage vows. So long as he shall live, my place is at his side—my will must bend to his."

"So long as he shall live!"

Gregory remembered that Manning was an old man—and a ray of light seemed to break the darkness of the far horizon.

Yet, looking at the pure face before him, he understood that no such thought had come to Eleanor—that her penance was unmitigated by any gleam of hope.

He made one more desperate effort to retain her, vain though he knew it to be.

"And my child?" he cried. "Do you think I will yield *him* to Manning—even if I have to yield you?"

Eleanor's face changed. Her head drooped wearily.

"Oh, this is hard to say," she murmured. "Harold, you were not without sin. This is your penance—your share of the Judgment

that is upon us both. We are one, you and I—together we have sinned, together we must atone.”

Harold Gregory turned away. She had pierced him as with a sword—but it was a flaming sword of light. All his pleasant self-approbation was shriveled up in its flame. He knew that he had sinned—and he bowed before her truth.

“You are right,” he groaned, and dropped into the low chair from which she had arisen. “How shall I bear it?”

Eleanor moved swiftly forward, and laid her hand upon his shoulder.

“You will know he is with me—that I will not let him forget you. And when he reaches manhood, and—*he*—”

By her shudder Gregory knew she spoke of Manning—

“—can never know—then, all the wealth that he bequeathed to Joe shall be given for some great and noble purpose—and if—if—you want us—?”

She stopped, in sad humility.

“—if,” he cried, rising, and taking her hands. “I shall but live—”

He checked himself. He would not mar the perfectness of her pure atonement with even a hint of a half guilty hope.

They held each other's hands, and gazed into each other's eyes in the silver moonlight. And, in that solemn hour, there was born, in the man's heart, a loftier love. It was as if the gates of Time, Space and Mortality opened wide, to reveal the deathless sweep of the Vast Eternal. And across those parted portals they saw themselves hand in hand—with none between!

He did not again take her in his arms, or press his lips to hers. Spirit gazed upon spirit through their purified eyes—and the anguish that must come later was held in abeyance, as they stood, side by side, upon the mountaintops of being, earthly desire, and passion, conquered, at their feet.

So they stood, and the moments passed unheeded. Then, they were recalled to earth by a cry!

“Mudder!”

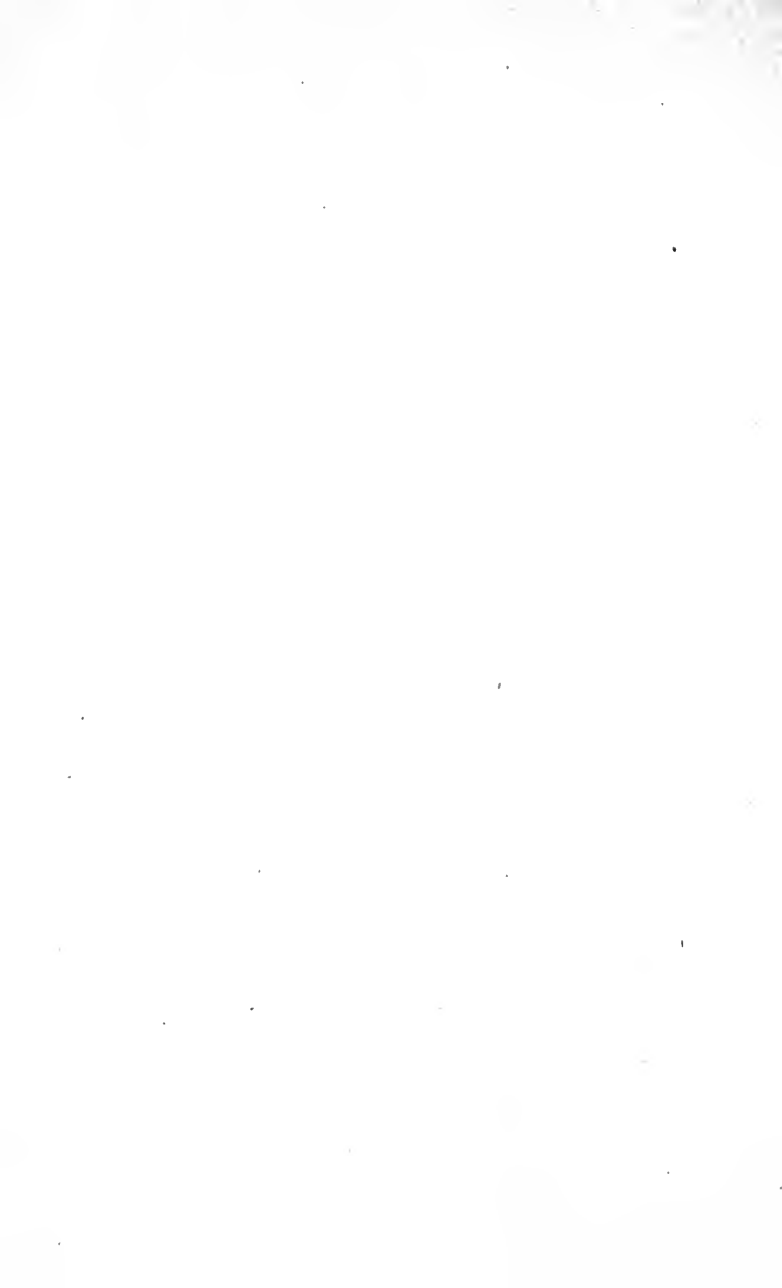
Gregory gave one glance of love and longing towards the opened window whence the sound came—one glance of uttermost adoration at the woman before him. Then he turned, and left her. At the gate, he paused long enough to hear her words: “Mother's coming, darling,” before he closed it behind him—and went out into the desert of the world—alone!

Eleanor, waiting till the gate closed, heard

the sound and felt it as a lash upon her naked heart. Then, ascending the stairs to find the child, she murmured:

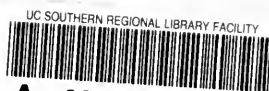
“Thy Judgment, O God, hath overwhelmed me!”

THE END





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